

WATCHMEN

Based on the graphic novel

by

Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons

FADE IN:

1. EXT. NEW YORK - LIBERTY ISLAND - DAY

The STATE OF LIBERTY stands watch at the mouth of the Hudson. Over scene we SUPER TITLE:

NEW YORK - JULY 1976

2. EXT. JERSEY CITY PIER - DAY

A live news update. Network correspondent CINDY CHAN stands at the edge of the dock, the statue plainly visible in the distance behind her

CINDY

-- insist that the situation is under control. Authorities have just agreed to the release of nine prisoners in hope of freeing the hostages. These include, Edgar William Jacobi, alias, Moloch, one of the so called "Super-villains" of the sixties.
(adjusting her hair)

We repeat: terrorists have taken Liberty Island and are holding some forty hostages - including tourists and maintenance workers - captive in the Statue of Liberty itself.

3. EXT. FERRYBOAT - DAY

The ferry - one of six anchored a half-mile off Liberty Island - has been commandeered by a fully-armed SWAT TEAM. The SWAT CAPTAIN is something of an individualist, he wears a Tyrolean hat with a red feather in it, (or something particularly memorable). He speaks to the terrorists via walkie-talkie.

SWAT CAPTAIN

Your demands are being met. The prisoners and the money are on their way. If you tune your TV to channel 4 you'll see the copters preparing for takeoff.

4. INT. STATUE - THAT MOMENT

The screen of a portable TV shows a POLICE MUGSHOT of MOLOCH.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

... Jacobi, alias Moloch, is doing twenty years for conspiracy to...

A GLOVED HAND re-tunes the TV to channel 4 where we see THREE HELICOPTERS lifting off from LaGuardia. We're in the OBSERVATION ROOM inside the statue's head. A TERRORIST holds a crowd of SQUEALING TOURISTS - men, women, schoolchildren wearing plastic Statue of Liberty souvenir laurels - at bay with an automatic rifle. TWO OTHERS stands by the windows, scanning the harbor for signs of a double-cross; and a fourth, the RINGLEADER, speaks into a walkie-talkie. All the TERRORISTS wear Richard Nixon masks.

RINGLEADER

Good. No tricks... Or we'll blow her brains out.

SWAT CAPTAIN (O.S.)
 (filter; from walkie-talkie)
 Blow whose brains out?

5. EXT. STATUE - THAT MOMENT

TIGHT on the ring of observation windows situated just below the jutting spikes of the crown. THE CAMERA pulls back rapidly to take in the whole of the statue's head.

RINGLEADER (O.S.)
 (a nasty laugh)
 Lady Liberty's, my friend! Lady Liberty's
 brains!

6 EXT. FERRY - THAT MOMENT - DAY

Mounting tension among the SWAT TEAM on deck.

SWAT COP
 I want that shit-kicker!

SWAT CAPTAIN
 Relax. We'll nail 'em on the transfer.
 Let's get the hostages out first.

SWAT COP II
 Captain... look... over the statue.

All eyes turn upwards. In the distance a TINY SPECK descends from the clouds and drops, in a perfectly vertical line, towards the head of the statue. The SWAT CAPTAIN hoists a pair of binoculars:

SWAT CAPTAIN
 I don't believe it!!!

SWAT COP
 Sir, what is it?

7 POV SHOT - THROUGH BINOCULARS

A magnified view of the SPECK, which turns out to be a futuristic, blimplike HOVERCRAFT -- the OWLSHIP.

SWAT CAPTAIN (O.S.)
 It's the Fucking Watchmen!

8. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT

In the cabin we find THREE COSTUMED SUPERHEROES: the red-and-gold suited CAPTAIN METROPOLIS: RORSCHACH, whose face is a shifting inkblot mask; and NIGHT OWL, who's manning the instrument panel.

NIGHT OWL
Ozymandias ... We're in position.

He looks up at a monitor mounted over the controls. ADRIAN VEIDT, aka OZYMANDIAS, blond scientific wizard, answers calmly from Watchmen HQ:

OZYMANDIAS
(on monitor)
Okay... Let's take out their communications.
Drop the scrambler.

9. EXT. HEAD OF STATUE - DAY

A line drops from the Owlship, and an ELECTRONIC DEVICE lands with a thud on the dome of Lady Liberty's crown.

10. INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - THAT MOMENT

TERRORISTS staring at the portable TV screen; suddenly, it shows nothing but snow. The RINGLEADER, suspicious, lifts his walkie-talkie:

RINGLEADER
Hey. We got a problem here --

He releases the button. No reply -- only loud, hissing STATIC.

RINGLEADER
Come in. Do you read me? Don't play around
with us! I'm warning you!

11. EXT. FERRY - THAT MOMENT

The SWAT CAPTAIN curses at his useless walkie-talkie. Teeth bared, he glowers up at the Owlship and paces the deck in a psychotic frenzy.

SWAT CAPTAIN
Ignorant bastards! They've jammed us!
How the fuck can we do a professional job
with these fucking fancy-dress vigilantes
on the loose!!!

12. EXT. LIBERTY ISLAND - THAT MOMENT - DAY

A HULKING FIGURE wearing SCUBA GEAR emerges from the water. He has an evil looking rifle slung over his shoulder. As he swaggers towards the base of the statue, he peels off his wetsuit to reveal yet another gaudy COSTUME underneath.

Superhero #4: THE COMEDIAN. He pins a BADGE to his leather breastplate: incongruously, it's a HAPPY-FACE BUTTON - and it matches his own nasty smile as he marches forward into battle.

13. INT. BASE OF STATUE - THAT MOMENT - DAY

A TRIO OF TERRORISTS are standing guard near the entrance at the base of the statue. They're holding a JANITOR at gunpoint. One of them is fumbling with his walkie-talkie, which has inexplicably gone haywire:

TERRORIST I
Base to head. Base to head. Come in!
(flustered)
I can't get shit!

TERRORIST II
What the hell's going on??

There's a sudden metallic clang behind them. They turn in unison just as the COMEDIAN struts into frame, assault rifle in hand.

TERRORIST I
(aghast)
The Comedian!

COMEDIAN
Hi there! Thought you might be in need of a laugh.

Panic. The three TERRORISTS fall into a tight cluster at the base of a long metal stairway. One of them grabs the JANITOR and holds a gun to his head.

TERRORIST I
Drop your gun or the old man's dead!

The COMEDIAN strikes a pose and scratches his chin.

COMEDIAN
That's amusing.

TERRORIST I
I mean it!

The COMEDIAN shrugs: okay. He lifts his rifle and fires TWO SILENCED SHOTS directly into the JANITOR's gut. The old man's body jerks twice and he slumps to the floor, stone dead.

COMEDIAN
How's that for lateral thinking?

The TERRORISTS stand there appalled. For an instant they're too stunned to shoot. The COMEDIAN begins to laugh and then stops and looks at them.

COMEDIAN
Hey, come on you guys -- where's your sense of humour?

He opens fire with a look of vicious pleasure on his face and kills the TERRORISTS.

14. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT

RORSCHACH and CAPTAIN METROPOLIS stand over an open hatch in the floor of the cabin. At the console, NIGHT OWL hits a button. Then --

15. INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - A MOMENT LATER - DAY

A sudden BOOM. A flash of colour. The startled TERRORISTS turn to the nearest window, and see a spectacular display of fireworks bursting above the harbor a short distance away.

While the TERRORISTS are distracted, our attention shifts to a point behind them. Through an observation window we see CAPTAIN METROPOLIS and RORSCHACH sliding down a thin metal cable and landing on the statue's upraised torch.

The TERRORISTS turn back just as the superheroes disappear around the far side of the torch.

RINGLEADER

I don't like this. Go check downstairs.

16. EXT. STATUE - ON TORCH - THAT MOMENT - DAY

RORSCHACH and CAPTAIN METROPOLIS pry open a metal door on the torch. CAPTAIN METROPOLIS puts on a pair of ionized sunglasses and goes through the door into the torch. RORSCHACH waits behind.

17. INT. BASE OF STATUE - A MOMENT LATER - DAY

The COMEDIAN is wandering around with a map of the statue's layout. He spots what looks like a manhole cover set in the concrete floor, strolls over and jimmies it open.

Another FIGURE in scuba gear climbs out. But this one's different. This one's a WOMAN.

COMEDIAN

Silk Spectre! Fancy meeting you here.

SILK SPECTRE climbs out and indicates the dead TERRORISTS and HOSTAGE.

SILK SPECTRE

Was that really necessary?

COMEDIAN

(shrugs)

It was fun.

As the COMEDIAN saunters off, SILK SPECTRE strips out of her slime-drenched wetsuit. You guessed it a garish (and kinda sexy) costume underneath.

SILK SPECTRE

Have you located the bomb?

COMEDIAN

Nag, nag, nag. Ever thought of getting married?

18. INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - THAT MOMENT - DAY

The TERRORISTS tense up at the sound of FOOTSTEPS. A moment later, CAPTAIN METROPOLIS appears on the stairs. The TERRORISTS train their guns on him - all but the RINGLEADER, who grabs a TEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL.

RINGLEADER

Metropolis, you geek! Get out of here or I kill the girl!

CAPT. METROPOLIS

Please. There's something I'd like you to see first.

He holds up what looks like an old-fashioned photographer's flash. All at once the room goes white -- and by the time the blinding light has dimmed, TERRORISTS and HOSTAGES alike are toppled to the floor, their nervous systems temporarily fried.

All except CAPTAIN METROPOLIS, who's wearing his special sunglasses. He pockets the shades and swiftly goes to work.

19. INT. STATUE - NEAR BASE - A MOMENT LATER

An edgy TERRORIST all alone, standing watch. Suddenly he's grabbed from behind -- and the COMEDIAN is holding the point of a bayonet at his throat.

COMEDIAN

There, I showed you my knife... now you show me your bomb.

20. INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - A MOMENT LATER - DAY

Everyone's slowly coming around. By now CAPTAIN METROPOLIS has the TERRORISTS tied up; he's consoling a squawling THREE-YEAR-OLD.

CAPTAIN METROPOLIS

It's all right, don't cry, you're quite safe now.
(standing; to the crowd)
Okay, everybody, listen carefully. We're going out through the torch.

He goes to a window, gives the thumbs-up sign to RORSCHACH out on the torch. RORSCHACH signals the Owlship.

21. EXT. STATUE - ON TORCH - A MOMENT LATER

A metal ladder descends from the belly of the Owlship. RORSCHACH secures it to the lip of the torch.

22. INT. STATUE - MIDSECTION - THAT MOMENT

SILK SPECTRE and THE COMEDIAN marching up a long metal stairway.

SILK SPECTRE

Should be just overhead. We have to distract them.

COMEDIAN

Just barge in. While they're staring at your tits, I'll blow their balls off.

They look up. A TERRORIST is peering down at them from an overhead landing. The COMEDIAN lifts his rifle and shoots him. Before the TERRORIST has hit the floor, the COMEDIAN has lobbed a gas grenade onto the landing.

23. INT. STATUE - STAIRWAY LANDING - A MOMENT LATER

Gas everywhere. The TERRORISTS BOMB sits in a complicated housing at the centre of the landing. Unconscious TERRORISTS are sprawled all around it. SILK SPECTRE and the COMEDIAN, in gas masks, march up the stairs and size things up.

COMEDIAN

Well. They look distracted. Mission accomplished!
(turning to Silk Spectre)
Gee, honey, I get so horny on these outings...

He leers at LAURIE through his mask, moves towards her and begins to undo his trousers.

COMEDIAN (CONTD)

... How about it you gorgeous prickly pear?
Come on, be nice to me for once.

LAURIE

(with utter contempt)
You're not going to show me that little thing again, are you?... LOOK OUT!

The COMEDIAN swings round. One of the TERRORISTS has still got some life in him. He drags himself over to the bomb and with his last ounce of strength flips a switch on the housing. A TIMER begins to count down. Thirty seconds. Twenty-nine.

COMEDIAN

Shit!

He hits a trigger on his belt and a RED SIGNAL LIGHT begins to blink. He spots an elevator door, runs over, and pries it open. An empty shaft: the car is some twenty stories below them.

SILK SPECTRE

What about the...

COMEDIAN

FUCK 'EM!!

He fastens the mountain climbers' CARABINER on his belt around the ELEVATOR CABLE - and drops out of sight. SILK SPECTRE hesitates only a second before following suit.

24. INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

CAPTAIN METROPOLIS is herding HOSTAGES down the stairway. All at once, he FREEZES. There's a red SIGNAL LIGHT flashing on his belt as well.

25. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT

YET ANOTHER RED LIGHT is flashing on NIGHT OWL's instrument panel. He looks up at VEIDT on the monitor.

NIGHT OWL

Ozymandias!

OZYMANDIAS

Yeah, I see it. Mission aborted.

NIGHT

Good God, we can't just...

OZYMANDIAS

Mission aborted, Night Owl!

NIGHT OWL reluctantly agrees. He lets out the throttle.

26. INT STATUE - STAIRWAY LANDING - THAT MOMENT

On the BOMB. The timer shows ten seconds to go.

27. INT. STATUE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - A MOMENT LATER

The COMEDIAN and SILK SPECTRE plummet downward, their BELT CLASPS throwing off sparks against the cable.

28. INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

CAPTAIN METROPOLIS at the window, petrified with fear, his hands pressed to the glass. He watches as the Owlship flies away -- and RORSCHACH, who's clinging to the metal ladder, is YANKED BODILY off the torch.

29. INT. STATUE - ELEVATOR SHAFT - THAT MOMENT

THE COMEDIAN makes a hard landing on the roof of a car. SILK SPECTRE touches down behind him just as he manages to pry open a set of elevator doors. The two of them dive through.

30. AERIAL SHOT - MOVING OVER HARBOR - A MOMENT LATER

RORSCHACH clings desperately to the metal ladder as the Owlship streaks across the harbor. Behind him is the rapidly receding figure of Lady Liberty.

Three beats later, a GAPING HOLE is blown open in her midsection.

31. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT

A heartsick NIGHT OWL pounds the control panel in frustration. On an overhead monitor, the upper portion of the statue is TOPPLING.

32. INT. STATUE - A MOMENT LATER

Smoke everywhere. The COMEDIAN and SILK SPECTRE are pressed flat against a concrete bulkhead. An overhang protects them from falling debris which is raining down in copious quantities.

33. EXT. FERRY - A MOMENT LATER

The furious SWAT CAPTAIN watches in astonishment as the top half of the statue disintegrates into rubble and tumbles to the ground. He turns away from the sight, shaking his head in vehement disgust.

SWAT CAPTAIN

That's it! I quit!

The water stirs. The boat begins to rock. On deck all eyes turn ---

34. EXT. LIBERTY ISLAND - THAT MOMENT - DAY

-- as a LUMINOUS BLUE-SKINNED GIANT, SIXTY FEET TALL, wades through the harbor and steps up onto the island. He stares in dismay at the demolished statue ... like a modern-day Colossus of Rhodes wondering what happened to his date.

Meet the last - and most powerful - member of our happy band: DR. MANHATTAN

Down below, THE COMEDIAN and SILK SPECTRE, battered but intact, crawl out of the wreckage. The COMEDIAN looks up at the huge blue figure looming over them, and shakes a gnat-sized fist:

COMEDIAN

MANHATTAN, YOU CAD! THIS LADY'S GONE
TO PIECES WAITING FOR YOU!

CUT TO:

35. EXT. OUTSIDE CITY HALL NIGHT

SHEILA SHEA, Channel 4 reporter, is standing outside City Hall addressing a TV camera. Behind her, paint-sprayed on the wall, is the graffiti: "WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN".

SHEILA

In the face of mounting public pressure, the city of New York has revoked its contract with Adrian Veidt, alias Ozymandias, and his super-team. Local police have threatened a city-wide walkout if criminal charges against the Watchmen are dropped. Sheila Shea, Channel 4 News, City Hall.

CUT TO:

36. INT. TV STUDIO NIGHT

The channel 4 Newsroom with JIM BRADLEY. On the bluescreen behind him, red circles with diagonal crossbars surround SIX HEAD SHOTS of the individual WATCHMEN.

JIM

And in Washington today, the Senate introduced legislation which would ban all costumed adventurers nationwide. Easy passage is expected.
(shuffling his papers)

It looks like the age of the superhero is official history.

DISSOLVE TO:

37. CREDITS SEQUENCE

TIMEPIECES of every description - pocket watches, grandfather clocks, travel alarms, all perfectly synchronized - DRIFT UPWARD through a vast black void, ticking off the seconds. At the stroke of midnight, GONGS sound, BUZZERS buzz, BELLS tinkle - and without warning the clocks EXPLODE. As gears and coils and crystals cascade downward through the void, we SUPER TITLE:

WATCHMEN

FADE THROUGH TO:

38. EXT. STREET EVENING

A ramshackle news kiosk. The OWNER, fat and stubbly, sits framed by the garish covers of comic books and nudie magazines staring at the high-rise across the street. One of his magazines, Nova Express, has a picture of Richard Nixon on the front cover and the headline: "HOW SICK IS DICK, AFTER 3RD HEART-OP?"

Adjacent to the kiosk is a wall on which is fastened a yellow and black nuclear warning sign and the words, FALLOUT SHELTER. Beneath this sign a SMALL BLACK KID is sitting reading a comic book. Beside him is a police poster bearing an "artist's impression" of RORSCHACH, with WANTED printed across the top of it and a list of particulars underneath with an offer of reward for information. THE CAMERA closes in tightly on the poster.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

(quiet, harsh, monotone)

My picture. Bad likeness... This city
is afraid of me... I see its true face... (contd)

Across the street three police cars, oddly truncated bubble-shaped vehicles, recognizable from the flashing red beacons on their roofs, sit on the curb amid a throng of ONLOOKERS.

A red haired STREET CRAZY, wearing a tatty raincoat and carrying a placard reading; THE END IS NIGH, picks up a copy of the New York Gazette: NEW SKIRMISH ON AFGHAN BORDER. RUSSKIES WALK OUT ON PEACE POWWOW.

NEWS VENDOR

We oughtta nuke Russia, and let God
sort it out.

The STREET CRAZY glances up at the NEWS VENDOR.

NEW VENDOR (CONTD)

'Course, that's just my opinion.

(indicating cop cars)

See that? Some guy went sidewalk divin'.

Depressed by all this bad news. Twenny-five cents.

Across the street a PLAINCLOTHES COP takes a statement from the DOORMAN of a high-rise block as PEDESTRIANS, clustering around a NYPD cordon, stare with sickened expressions at a gruesome mess on the sidewalk.

PATROLMAN

STAND BACK! MOVE ALONG!

We are not in New York as we know it; in this strange offshoot of reality, everything - the clothes, the cars, the very look of the city - seems just a touch off. The PATROLMAN, for instance: his standard-issue uniform consists of full riot gear, and his plastisteel breastplate is festooned with heavy artillery. He clears a path for a squad of PARAMEDICS as they lift a bloody parcel onto a stretcher and move towards a waiting ambulance. Before they have reached the ambulance their path is crossed by the placard bearing STREET CRAZY. As they stop to avoid him something falls from the stretcher and rolls into the gutter. Nobody on the scene appears to notice this.

THE CAMERA follows whatever fell from the stretcher and closes in to show a HAPPY-FACE BUTTON. A tiny diagonal fleck of BLOOD stains its surface, like the hand of a clock poised at twelve minutes to midnight.

Rorschach's monologue has been running throughout the above scene.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

... The streets are extended gutters and the gutters are full of blood ... when the drains finally scab over, all vermin will drown... The accumulated filth and all their sex and murder will foam up about their waists... and all the whores and politicians will look up and shout "save us!"... and I'll look down and whisper "no."... They had a choice... all of them. Now the whole world... on the brink. Staring down into bloody hell... all those liberals and intellectuals and smooth-talkers... and all of a sudden nobody can think of anything to say.

Towards the end of the monologue THE CAMERA begins to pull back from the HAPPY-FACE BUTTON. It rises above the heads of the CROWD in the street and continues to climb twenty stories up the side of the high-rise, revealing more of the geography below as it does so. Eventually, it stops just above a broken window. A MAN with a bald patch on the top of his head is peering out of the broken window and down into the street. Rorschach's monologue comes to an end.

BALD BURNS

Hmm. That's quite a drop.

CUT TO:

39. INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT EVENING

Inside the apartment with the broken window. The place is a mess, showing all the signs of a violent fight having occurred here. HYDE, a plain clothes cop, is looking at the shattered door-frame. He examines a sturdy security chain which has been wrenched from the door. Outside, in the corridor, a uniformed COP stands guard. BURNS is still at the broken window.

HYDE

Yeh... I wonder if you black out before you hit the sidewalk, or what?

BURNS moves nervously away from the broken window.

HYDE (CONTD)

You'd need more than one guy to do this. Or one guy on serious drugs. The chain was fastened...

CUT TO:

40. (FLASHBACK) INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT CORRIDOR EVENING

From the corridor a FOOT kicks the front door open. As the lock and chain break we catch a glimpse inside of BLAKE, alias THE COMEDIAN, turning in surprise from the TV which he's been sitting watching. He is wearing a bathrobe with a HAPPY-FACE BUTTON pinned to it, and is holding a can of beer.

HYDE (V.O.)

... Which means, the guy was home when it happened.

CUT TO:

41. INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT EVENING

BURNS picks his way through wreckage to a desk.

BURNS

I saw the body. For a guy his age he was in terrific shape.

HYDE

Y'mean apart from being dead?

CUT TO:

42. (FLASHBACK) INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT EVENING

From behind THE CAMERA a fist shoots out and smashes into the COMEDIAN's jaw. He staggers backwards and crashes into a picture on the wall.

BURNS (V.O.)

He had muscles like a weightlifter.

CUT TO:

43. INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT EVENING

HYDE is examing a shattered mirror fixed to the wall.

HYDE

Must have been several guys...
Overpowered him.

BURNS, reflected in the broken mirror, picks up a framed photograph lying on the desk.

BURNS

(thoughtful)

That data we got about him doing
some sort of diplomatic work...

CUT TO:

44. (FLASHBACK) INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT EVENING

From behind THE CAMERA two hands grip the lapels of BLAKE's bathrobe and smash the back of his head against the mirror that Hyde was examining in the previous scene. The mirror shatters.

HYDE (V.O.)

Expense account living... Maybe he just
got soft.

CUT TO:

45. INT HIGH-RISE APARTMENT EVENING

HYDE is standing beside the shattered mirror. BURNS is looking at the photograph he's picked up.

BURNS

Hey, the guy he's shakin' hands with here!
It's Vice President Ford!

CUT TO:

46. (FLASHBACK) INT HIGH-RISE APARTMENT EVENING

BLAKE, blood pouring from his mouth, collapses onto the floor. His ASSAILANT, (we only see his legs) kicks him repeatedly in the stomach and ribs.

HYDE (V.O.)

So it is!... Listen, I think we can rule
Ford out as a suspect. This job doesn't
seem like his style.

47. INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT EVENING

BURNS and HYDE are leaving the apartment.

BURNS

(setting down the photo)

What's going on here? A little money
got stolen, but no way is this a straight
burglary.

CUT TO:

48. (FLASHBACK) INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT EVENING

BLAKE, blood flowing from his nose and mouth and looking severely
concussed, stares dully at his ASSAILANT as two hands, coming from
behind THE CAMERA, lift him, slowly, by the lapels of his bathrobe.

BURNS (V.O.)

Somebody really has it in for this guy.

CUT TO:

49. INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE APARTMENT EVENING

BURNS and HYDE leave the apartment, pass the uniformed COP on guard,
and walk towards the elevator at the end of the corridor where a MAN
is standing waiting.

BURNS

I mean, how did he get out of the window?
That's strong glass, man.

CUT TO:

50. (FLASHBACK) INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT EVENING

BLAKE's ASSAILANT, unidentified throughout, hoists the unconscious
BLAKE above his head and moves towards the window.

HYDE (V.O.)

Maybe he tripped.

CUT TO:

51. INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE APARTMENT EVENING

BURNS and HYDE approach the elevator.

BURNS

There's somethin' weird about this.
Y'know what I think?

HYDE

Don't gimme your Forschach line.

BURNS

Come on... He's still out there.
He's crazier than a snake's armpit and
wanted on six counts murder one.

HYDE

Rorschach always leaves his signature.

The elevator doors open. The MAN gets in and holds the doors open
for HYDE and BURNS.

MAN

Which floor ya want?

BURNS

Oh, uh, ground floor, please.

CUT TO:

52. (FLASHBACK) INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT EVENING

From behind THE CAMERA (we see only his hands) BLAKE's ASSAILANT hurles
BLAKE at the window with terrific force. BLAKE smashes through the glass
and falls out of sight.

MAN (V.O.)

Ground floor comin' up.

CUT TO:

53. INT HIGH-RISE APARTMENT NIGHT

Blake's wrecked apartment is illuminated by moonlight flooding through
the broken window. A small metal object is sitting on the lower part
of the steel frame which contained the now smashed window. This object
is moving slightly and making scraping noises against the frame. On
closer examination this object is shown to be a grappling-hook. Attached
to the hook is a taut wire which leads down on the outside of the building.
The wire is moving slightly from side to side. As we watch this curious
phenomenon, the shadowy figure of a MAN appears from below hauling himself
up the wire. He reaches the broken window, climbs through and sits on the
frame surveying the room. He is wearing a tatty trenchcoat and a narrow-
brimmed hat. As he looks up we see that his face is covered with a soft
white mask on which black viscous blobs move around creating a non-stop
kaleidoscope of symmetrical patterns.

RORSCHACH takes something from his pocket and examines it closely.
We see that he is holding the blood stained HAPPY-FACE BUTTON in his
gloved hand. He wipes the surface of the button, but the congealed blood
doesn't move. He puts the button back in his pocket, takes out a flash-
light, eases himself off the window frame, and begins to look around.

54. INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT - BEDROOM - A MOMENT LATER - NIGHT

RORSCHACH's flashlight beam shines across rumpled bedclothes, searches around the walls, and settles finally on the half-open door to a walk-in closet. RORSCHACH steps inside, examines rack upon rack of expensive suits.

He shoves the suits aside. Then, mysteriously, he begins to pound on the wall with his fist, moving left, right, up, down.

He pauses. He's found a hollow section. He feels his way carefully along the seams of the wall and floorboard until he discovers a concealed trigger. He presses it and a panel slides back, revealing a second, secret closet, hidden inside the first.

He reaches up, flicks on a light. Inside the secret closet: a bizarre uniform - helmet, mask and gloves, a gaudy-coloured bodysuit, rows of exotic weaponry. On the wall nearby hangs a dusty framed photograph.

RORSCHACH examines the photo. It's a group shot, six men and one woman, all dressed in garish uniforms. The man in the centre is wearing the costume on the wall before us... the COMEDIAN's costume.

They're all there, all the Watchmen: NIGHT OWL. SILK SPECTRE. CAPTAIN METROPOLIS. DR. MANHATTAN. ADRIAN VEIDT. And of course, RORSCHACH himself. He eyes this quirky memento of days gone by.

RORSCHACH

Hurm.

CUT TO.

55. EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A light rain is falling as DANIEL DREIBERG, 44, thickset and bespectacled, walks, dispiritedly, along a dirty, litter-strewn, badly lit street. He is carrying shopping. He approaches the door to a graffiti covered building: WHO WATCHES THE WATCHMEN (very faded), THE TIGERS OF WRATH ARE WISER THAN THE HORSES OF EXPERIENCE, NIXON FOR POPE. He fumbles through his pockets and produces a bunch of keys, but on getting closer to the door he sees that it is slightly ajar and that the lock has been smashed, (reminiscent of The Comedian's door). DREIBERG is dismayed. He glances, fearfully, up and down the street before cautiously pushing open the door and entering the building.

56. INT. DREIBERG'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

The hallway is in darkness but light is streaming from the edges of a slightly open door at the far end of it. DREIBERG sets down his shopping, lifts an old-fashioned barometer off the wall, and gripping it like a club, tiptoes nervously forward. On reaching the door he holds his breath and peers into the room beyond.

57. INT. DREIBERG'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

DREIBERG, squinting through the door, is astonished by what he sees in his kitchen. Sitting at the kitchen table, eating baked-beans, noisily and messily, from a can, is RORSCHACH. His inkblot mask is hooked up over his nose, exposing a mouthful of bad teeth. He has his back to DREIBERG but seems to be aware of what is going on behind him.

RORSCHACH
(continuing to eat)
Hello, Night Owl.

DREIBERG
(appalled)
Rorschach!

RORSCHACH
Got hungry waiting. Hope you don't mind.

DREIBERG is not happy to see RORSCHACH but he tries, politely, not to show it. He steps into the kitchen, hiding the barometer.

DREIBERG
Uh... No, no, of course not. Um... You want me to heat those up for you?

RORSCHACH
No.

DREIBERG is wondering, anxiously, why DREIBERG is here.

DREIBERG
It's been a long time... How've you been keeping?

RORSCHACH
Out of jail... (beat) So far.

He takes the Comedian's blood-stained HAPPY-BUTTON out of his pocket and skims it across the table towards DREIBERG. DREIBERG picks it up.

DREIBERG
(cautious)
Uhh... What er...?

DREIBERG takes off his glasses and peers more closely at the button.

DREIBERG (CONT'D)
This little stain... Is this bean juice, or er...?

RORSCHACH, having finished the beans, wipes his mouth, pulls his mask back into place and proceeds to pour wrapped sugar cubes from Dreiberger's sugar-jar onto the table. He then scoops the cubes into his pocket.

RORSCHACH
Human bean juice. (beat) The Comedian's dead.

DREIBERG

(stunned)

The Comedian!

RORSCHACH

Thrown out of his apartment window.

(beat)

Didn't live on ground floor.

DREIBERG

Are you sure it was...

RORSCHACH

Sure.

RORSCHACH produces a notebook stuffed with old newspaper clippings.

RORSCHACH (CONTD)

Got list of suspects.

DREIBERG's eye falls on the uppermost newspaper clipping.

DREIBERG

Moloch?

He takes the faded clipping from RORSCHACH and looks at it.

58 DREIBERG'S POV - MOLOCH'S NEWS-CLIPPING PHOTOGRAPH

MOLOCH's police mugshot. He looks about twenty-five.

DREIBERG (V.O.)

I'd forgotten about him.

59 INT. DREIBERG'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

RORSCHACH (taking back photo)

Never forget... Never compromise.

DREIBERG quickly drags the table across the floor and jams it against the inside of the kitchen door.

DREIBERG

Listen, lets talk about this in my workshop.
I feel kinda exposed up here.

DREIBERG sorts hastily through his keys and unlocks a steel door. As he does so RORSCHACH picks up a framed photograph from a kitchen work surface. The photo is of a very sexy SILK SPECTRE in full (i.e. scant) costume.

RORSCHACH

Silk Spectre.

DREIBERG takes the photo from RORSCHACH, drops it into a drawer and ushers him through the steel door.

DREIBERG

Also, you can use the hidden exit. Uh, when you leave that is.

60. INT. DREIBERG'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Dim overhead naked light-bulbs come on revealing a large basement/garage area. This is untidy, filled with dust and cobwebs, and has a leaking ceiling. In the center of the floor, covered with a tattered tarpaulin, is the OWLSHIP. Other NIGHT OWL gear is lying, abandoned, all around. DREIBERG and RORSCHACH enter down a flight of steps at the bottom of which, set out for the purposes of quick-change, is NIGHT OWL'S costume.

DREIBERG

You haven't been down here for a while.

RORSCHACH runs his gloved finger along a dusty railing and examines the result.

RORSCHACH

You neither.

DREIBERG

No... Well, since I retired... Listen, about the Comedian... Jesus. What... a burglar?

RORSCHACH

(derisively)

Huh!

DREIBERG

No... I suppose not... He'd been working for the government, hadn't he? Maybe it was political.

RORSCHACH

Maybe. (beat) Or maybe someone's pickin' off the costumed heroes.

DREIBERG

(shocked)

What?...

(trying to recover)

Um... Isn't that, perhaps...a little paranoid?

RORSCHACH

No. (beat) Thought I'd warn you.

RORSCHACH sets off briskly towards the mouth of a dark tunnel set in a wall of the workshop. DREIBERG hurries after him.

DREIBERG

Uh, thanks. Er... you remember the way?

RORSCHACH

Yeh.

DREIBERG

(eager)

Did you warn Laurie?

RORSCHACH

Silk Spectre... Going there now. You have a message?

DREIBERG

(diffident)

Er... no. No.

DREIBERG forces a chuckle, trying to lighten the atmosphere and reach out to RORSCHACH. They stop at the entrance to the tunnel.

DREIBERG (CONTD)

Aha... We were a great team y'know... you and me... Those were great times... Whatever happened to them?

RORSCHACH turns and walks into the tunnel leaving DREIBERG looking after him.

RORSCHACH

You quit.

DREIBERG watches RORSCHACH disappear into the gloom. He puts his hands into his pockets and inadvertently discovers the Comedian's HAPPY-BUTTON. He takes it out, looks at it and sighs.

61 EXT. ROCKEFELLER MILITARY RESEARCH CENTRE - NIGHT

A searchlight beam plays across a notice informing us that we are at the entrance to the Rockefeller Military Research Center. Behind the notice is a high wire security fence and beyond that the outline of research buildings. It's raining.

CUT TO a jagged hole in the fence through which we see, walking away from us towards the research buildings, the hunched figure of RORSCHACH.

CUT TO shots of heavily armed MILITARY GUARDS patrolling the grounds. RORSCHACH, evading them, runs from cover to cover, making his way deeper into the plant. Eventually he arrives at a door marked SPECIAL TALENT QUARTERS. PRIVATE. He punches a hole in the glass of the door, unlocks it and steps inside.

The following V.O. runs throughout the above sequence.

RORSCHACH

The Comedian - dead. Mothman - deranged.
Ozymandias - sold out. Dreiberg - a flabby
failure. Silk Spectre - gone domestic.
Manhattan - scarcely human... (beat)
Why am I the only one left, active, healthy,
and without personality disorders?

62. INT. ROCKEFELLER CENTER - SPECIAL TALENT QUARTERS - NIGHT

RORSCHACH walks down a dark corridor towards a heavy, studded, security door.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Now I'll tell the indestructable man someone
plans to murder him.

He begins to push open the door.

63. INT. ROCKEFELLER CENTRE - DR. MANHATTAN'S LABORATORY - NIGHT

As RORSCHACH enters a soft, unforced but nevertheless loud voice echoes around.

VOICE (O.S.)

Good evening, Rorschach.

RORSCHACH looks up towards the roof and we CUT TO his POV to see DR MANHATTAN - Jon Osterman to his friends - who's presently forty feet tall, bright blue, and buck naked. He's calmly adjusting a calibration at the top of his huge particle accelerator. LAURIE, aka SILK SPECTRE, attractive, mid-thirties, is watching him.

RORSCHACH

Good evening, Dr. Manhattan.

LAURIE

(taken aback)

What the hell are you doing here?

RORSCHACH

Good evening, Silk Spectre.

LAURIE

(irritated)

Laurie Juspeczyk! Silk Spectre doesn't
exist any more.

RORSCHACH

Pity.

LAURIE

What do you want?

RORSCHACH

The Comedian's dead.

DR. MANHATTAN shrinks quickly down to normal size.

DR. MANHATTAN

I know.

LAURIE

(put out)

You didn't tell me.

DR. MANHATTAN

It's not a significant fact. I understand the C.I.A. suspect Libya.

RORSCHACH

Mnn... I take it you're not overly concerned.

DR. MANHATTAN stares at a bank of machinery. As we watch, a panel detaches itself from the front of the console and floats off to the side. A module of circuit boards, chips, and pin connectors slides out of the hole. Individual components detach themselves and hang in mid-air. DR. MANHATTAN hasn't lifted a finger. He's dismantling and reassembling his equipment through sheer force of mind.

DR. MANHATTAN

A live body and a dead body contain the same number of particles. Life and death are unquantifiable abstracts. Why should I be concerned?

LAURIE, obviously disliking this line from DR. MANHATTAN, turns abruptly away and lights a cigarette.

RORSCHACH

Silk Spectre doesn't agree.

LAURIE

Mind your own business!

RORSCHACH

(unwrapping a sugar cube)

I came to warn you...

LAURIE

The Comedian was a monster!...And you should be behind bars!

RORSCHACH

The Comedian died in his country's service...

LAURIE

Bullshit!... Jon, get this creep out of here!

DR. MANHATTAN

You seem to be upsetting Laurie. I think you ought to go.

RORSCHACH

I think someone is eliminating masked
adventurers. Possibly some old foe.
I believe...

DR. MANHATTAN

I said I think you ought to go.

RORSCHACH

Spent a long time getting to see you.
Not leaving before I've...

DR. MANHATTAN concentrates his gaze on RORSCHACH who dematerializes.

CUT TO:

64. EXT. STREET - HAPPY HARRY'S BAR - NIGHT

RORSCHACH rematerializes on the pavement outside HAPPY HARRY'S, a sleazy bar.

RORSCHACH

... had my say.

He looks around in surprise.

RORSCHACH (CONTD)

Hurm.

He sees HAPPY HARRY'S bar and enters.

65. INT. HAPPY HARRY'S BAR - NIGHT

The usual crowd, living it up. HOOKERS line the bar. DRUG DEALERS hover
at the entrance to the men's room. ASSORTED GOONS and THUGS stand clustered
at the pool table, watching a TOPLESS DANCER bump and grind.
RORSCHACH enters.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

I believe I shall take my exercise.

He approaches the bar. Everyone falls silent. HAPPY HARRY, polishing
glasses behind the bar, breaks into a cold sweat and begins to tremble.

HAPPY HARRY

(panic stricken)

Ruh, Ror, Ror, Rorschach! Har, har, how
ya doin' fella?

RORSCHACH

I'm fine, Happy Harry. Yourself?

HAPPY HARRY

Fine! I'm fuh... I'm fine! And I'm, and I'm
glad you're fine too! And uh, and uh...
Oh God! Please don't kill anybody.

RORSCHACH

Guy went sidewalk diving, Friday night.
Opposite Promethean Cab office. I'm sure
you all heard about it... Friend of mine...
Need information.

The OCCUPANTS of the bar look on silently.

RORSCHACH (CONTD)

... Information.

RORSCHACH strolls over to a table picks on a large THUG and proceeds to break the fingers of one of his hands, one by one. After each finger he looks around the bar at the frightened customers who shrink and shake their heads.

RORSCHACH (V.O. above action)

Somebody knows who killed Comedian... Somebody knows why... Unfortunately, that somebody ain't here.

RORSCHACH drops the THUG with the broken fingers on the floor and walks to the door.

RORSCHACH (V.O. CONTD)

I leave the human cockroaches to discuss their heroin and child pornography. I have business elsewhere with a better class of person.

RORSCHACH exits.

CUT TO:

66. EXT. THE VEIDT TOWER - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

The VEIDT TOWER, a tall obelisk shaped building, dominates the downtown skyline. Veidt's name is featured on the top of each of its four facets. An airship advertizing Veidt Industries hovers near the top of the tower. A thunderstorm is in progress.

VEIDT (V.O.)

The Comedian, murdered? But why?

CUT TO:

67. INT. VEIDT OFFICE SUITE - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

VEIDT's huge office is situated in the top of the Veidt Tower. The decor reflects his interest in things Egyptian; ancient vases, sarcophagi, busts of Anubis, granite cats, etc. Veidt's desk stands by a window at one end of a highly polished marble floor. On the desk is a computer terminal, (share indexes constantly roll across the display) and a number of toy OZYMANDIAS figures (Veidt's costumed hero persona).

VEIDT himself is tall, athletic, handsome, blond. He is talking to RORSCHACH who would appear to have arrived by his customary method; a grappling hook with attached wire is fastened to the lower part of the frame of a broken window. RORSCHACH, soaking wet, stands in a pool of water and broken glass. Wind whips through the hole in the window.

RORSCHACH

You're supposed to be the world's smartest man, Veidt. You tell me.

VEIDT

I never claimed to be anything special, Rorschach. I just have some over-enthusiastic PR men... I suppose it could have been a political killing. Maybe the Soviets...

RORSCHACH

America has Dr. Manhattan. The reds wouldn't dare antagonize us. I think we've got a mask killer.

VEIDT

Isn't that a little fanciful?

RORSCHACH

No.

VEIDT

He had plenty of enemies. The man was practically a Nazi.

RORSCHACH

He stood up for his country, Veidt. He never let anybody retire him. Never cashed in on his reputation...

RORSCHACH picks up one of the OZYMANDIAS toys from the desk.

RORSCHACH (CONTD)

... Never merchandized diet books or posters or 'T' shirts or place mats or toy models of himself. Never prostituted his talents. If that makes him a Nazi you might as well call me a Nazi too.

VEIDT

(thoughtful)

Hm.

VEIDT produces a cigarette which he lights by striking on the side of the packet.

RORSCHACH

You weren't exactly sweet on the Comedian were you?

VEIDT

Who was?... Have you come here to warn me
or accuse me?

RORSCHACH

Can't decide.

VEIDT

I owe a lot to the Comedian. He made me
see that devoting my life to chasing petty
criminals was pathetic. He started me doing
something positive. Something creative. My
work for world peace. No point in being smart
after World War Three.

RORSCHACH

World peace... How is she?

VEIDT

Improving.

RORSCHACH

That's not what I hear.

RORSCHACH throws the toy Ozymandias onto the desk, goes to the window
and begins to climb out.

RORSCHACH (CONTD)

Came to warn you about the mask killer, so
you wouldn't end up the smartest man in the
morgue... But I guess there's worse things to
end up as... Be seeing you.

RORSCHACH begins to absail down his wire. VEIDT watches him go.

VEIDT

Sure. Thanks. Have a nice day.

CUT TO:

68. INT. MILITARY CENTER - LIVING QUARTERS - PRE-DAWN

The bedroom which LAURIE shares with DR MANHATTAN at the Rockefeller
Research Center. It's not quite six AM, still dark outside, and LAURIE
is asleep. She stirs and reaches over to where DR MANHATTAN should be,
but his side of the bed is empty.

LAURIE

(muttering. groggy)

Jon?

A LUMINOUS BLUE HAND enters frame and gently strokes her cheek. LAURIE
sighs.

LAURIE (CONTD)

When do you have to do that TV interview?

DR MANHATTAN

Later. We have plenty of time.

A SECOND BLUE HAND enters frame and strokes LAURIE'S hair. She stretches luxuriantly and kisses and licks the FIRST BLUE HAND.

LAURIE

(beginning to flow)

Mnn. Your finger... It's like licking a flashlight battery... It's all sort of...

At this point the SECOND BLUE HAND travels down LAURIE'S body where it almost collides with a THIRD BLUE HAND which is massaging her thigh. After a beat, LAURIE registers the presence of the THIRD HAND. Her eyes open wide.

LAURIE

Uhhh...?

She sits bolt upright in bed. There are TWO DR. MANHATTANS sitting on the bed beside her.

LAURIE (CONTD)

AAAAAAH!

She leaps out of bed and grabs a bathrobe.

LAURIE (CONTD)

Oh God! Oh God, it's horrible! Stop it!

DR. MANHATTAN 1.

Laurie, don't be upset.

LAURIE

(freaked)

Jon, be one again! Please!

DR. MANHATTAN 2.

(soothingly)

It's okay, it's okay... I did it to please you. I thought...

DR. MANHATTAN 1.

... you would find it stimulating.

LAURIE

(fumbling in her purse)

I... I know... I'm sorry. I over-reacted... You just startled me, that's all.

LAURIE throws down the purse and looks around.

LAURIE (CONTD)

I'll be all right... I need a cigarette.

She steps out into the hall.

DR. MANHATTAN 1.

I'm really sorry. I just wanted to...

LAURIE hesitates, wondering where she left her cigarettes.

LAURIE

Jon, please, it's okay. Forget it.
It doesn't...matter.

From the hallway LAURIE has glanced through a door into the lab. Here to her utter astonishment she sees a THIRD DR. MANHATTAN calmly running an experiment.

69. INT. LAB - A MOMENT LATER

DR. MANHATTAN 1. (O.V.)

Well, if you're sure you're all right...
Laurie?

LAURIE glances back towards the bedroom and then marches angrily through the doorway into the lab.

LAURIE

How the hell long have you been working
out here?!

DR. MANHATTAN 1. follows her into the lab.

DR. MANHATTAN 1.

Laurie, try to understand...

LAURIE

Understand, nothing! You were working in
here while we were in bed!

DR. MANHATTAN 3.

Laurie. My work is at an important stage.
It's really unnecessary to...

LAURIE grabs a glass beaker full of coloured liquid from a nearby table and hurles it at DR. MANHATTAN 3. It passes clean through him and smashes on top of a lab table.

LAURIE

Shut up! I hate you!

DR. MANHATTAN 1.

Laurie...

LAURIE

I'm leaving! I'm getting dressed and I'm
leaving! That's it!

DR. MANHATTAN 1.

Can't we talk?

LAURIE storms out. DR. MANHATTAN 1. follows her.

DR. MANHATTAN 1.

If you think there's a problem with my attitude I'm happy to discuss it.

O.O.V. a door slams.

DR MANHATTAN 1. (O.V.)

Laurie...?

Left alone in the lab, DR. MANHATTAN 3., by sheer force of mind, reassembles the broken beaker and its contents. It comes together in his hand.

CUT TO:

70. INT. MOLOCH'S APARTMENT - PRE-DAWN

Moloch's slum apartment building is depressing. The paint is peeling, there is a stack of dirty dishes in the sink and an even bigger stack of garbage in the corner. From somewhere in the apartment we hear a dry, rasping cough. A moment later, MOLOCH (the owner of the cough), opens the door and enters. The light from the landing makes the kitchen look even bleaker than before. MOLOCH, ex ace-villain, is about sixty years old, tall with a slight stoop, hollow eyed and gaunt. He is wearing a pair of pyjamas. He coughs again and opens the refrigerator. As he does so, somebody, accompanied by a shower of eggs and milk bottles, leaps out of the refrigerator and grabs him.

MOLOCH

(reeling back)

Ahhhh!

The creature from the fridge has thrown MOLOCH to the floor and pinned him there, arms behind his back, before we realize that it's RORSCHACH.

MOLOCH (CONTD)

(writhing)

Oh God, please, no... I don't have any money... A few bucks... Please!...Take it!...

RORSCHACH

Edgar William Jacobi, also known as Edgar William Vaughn, also known as William Edgar Bright... Also known as Moloch.

MOLOCH

...I don't know what you're talking about.

RORSCHACH twists MOLOCH's arm up behind his head.

RORSCHACH

Lying! Do it again, broken arm. Not joking.

MOLOCH

Ahh!... No!... Please!... I'm not
Moloch any more!...I did my time!

RORSCHACH

Twenty years. Ever feel twinge of bitterness
towards guy who put you there?

MOLOCH

No. Never.

RORSCHACH twists MOLOCH's arm again.

MOLOCH (CONTD)

Argh!... I used to!... A little bit...
But not anymore!

RORSCHACH turns MOLOCH over and holds him by the throat.

RORSCHACH

You'll be glad to hear he's dead.

MOLOCH

What?... The Comedian?... How?

RORSCHACH picks MOLOCH up and pins him to the wall.

RORSCHACH

I'm asking you.

MOLOCH

(eyes widening in terror)
I don't know! I didn't know!

RORSCHACH

(tightening his grip)
Lying again!

MOLOCH

Arh!... No!... I swear!... Please... Arggg!

MOLOCH is now beginning to choke.

MOLOCH (CONTD)

Argh!... I got something... Aghh... I got
something...

RORSCHACH

(relaxing his grip)
Though you might.

MOLOCH

(coughing)
He broke in here... to see me... a
couple of weeks ago.

RORSCHACH

Enemies for forty years. Why should he do that?

MOLOCH

I don't know... I woke up, he was in the room... drunk... babbling... not making sense. I thought he was going to kill me... He was mad about something... Something about some island with scientists on it... I dunno... He mentioned Dr. Manhattan... Then he finished my Scotch and left... I don't know what the hell it was all about... I swear.

RORSCHACH

Hurm... Unbelievable story. (beat)
Probably true.

MOLOCH

It's true. I'm clean.

RORSCHACH

You? Clean?

RORSCHACH produces a container of pills from his pocket.

RORSCHACH (CONTD)

Searched your apartment. Found illegal drugs.

MOLOCH

Illegal?... But I don't use drugs. Listen, if you're planting evidence...

RORSCHACH

Laetril. Phony medication. Made from apricot pits. Outlawed three years ago. Illegal.

MOLOCH

Oh, come on...

RORSCHACH

When you remember something more. Leave a note in the trash can opposite Gunga Diner at fortieth and seventh.

RORSCHACH moves to the door.

RORSCHACH

Think hard. And defrost your refrigerator. See you soon.

RORSCHACH exits.

CUT TO:

71. EXT. OUTSIDE DREIBERG'S FRONT DOOR - LATE AFTERNOON.

A LOCKSMITH is repairing the lock on DREIBERG's door. The logo on his jacket reads THE GORDIAN KNOT LOCK CO. LAURIE approaches down the street, peers through the doorway and enters.

72. INT. DREIBERG'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - A MOMENT LATER

LAURIE steps through the doorway past the LOCKSMITH and encounters DREIBERG in the hall.

DREIBERG
(amazed)

Laurie?

LAURIE
Hi, Daniel. Mind if I come in?

DREIBERG
Er, no, no, of course.

He ushers her into the kitchen.

LAURIE
Thanks.

DREIBERG
Er... Gosh... Wow... How long has it been...?

73. INT. DREIBERG'S KITCHEN - A MOMENT LATER

DREIBERG follows LAURIE into the kitchen and closes the door behind him, checking, nervously, on the LOCKSMITH as he does so. He's been carrying a torch for Laurie for years and is totally thrown by her presence.

LAURIE
Six years... Since we saw each other.

DREIBERG
Six years... You look great... Er, sit down.

LAURIE sits at the table.

DREIBERG (CONTD)
(laughs)
I'm afraid I got a little flabby... Coffee?

LAURIE
Uh huh.

DREIBERG fusses nervously about, turning on a kettle, fixing cups, etc.

DREIBERG
Hey, it's great to see you... How's tricks?
Sugar?

LAURIE

(tense)

Uh, yeh, please.

DREIBERG

(anxious)

Um...Look... Nobody followed you here did they? I mean...

LAURIE

No. I was careful. Don't worry.

DREIBERG checks his sugar canister and finds one cube.

DREIBERG

That's funny. I thought I had more sugar than that. Is one lump okay, or...?

LAURIE breaks down and begins to sob uncontrollably.

DREIBERG

(amazed)

Laurie...? Hey, what is it?

DREIBERG would like to take her in his arms and he feels he ought to but he can't quite manage it. He moves towards her but then retreats.

LAURIE

(sobbing)

Oh God... I'm sorry...

DREIBERG

(embarrassed)

Hey, look, it's okay... Here's some Kleenex.

He thrusts a box of Kleenex at her.

LAURIE

I left Jon.

She blows her nose.

DREIBERG

(stunned)

Oh... I see... That is, I, uh...

LAURIE

Don't worry, I haven't come to stay...

DREIBERG

Ah... No... But...

LAURIE

I'm sorry... I didn't want to dump all this on you... I just had to talk to somebody...

DREIBERG

Sure, sure.

LAURIE

I don't know anybody else...! I don't know anybody else except Goddamned suh-super-heroes!

DREIBERG

(dithering)

If I can help...

LAURIE

I've wasted my life...

DREIBERG

Nonsense...

LAURIE

Ten years running around in that stupid, undignified, sexist costume... And then eight years... a kept woman for the military's special weapon... I was only there to keep Jon relaxed and happy.

DREIBERG

Well, listen... have you talked to him about...

LAURIE

Living with him... You don't know what it's like...

CUT TO:

74. INT. MILITARY CENTRE - LIVING QUARTERS

DR. MANHATTAN is sitting, naked, on the side of the bed, puzzling over one of Laurie's brassieres.

LAURIE (V.O.)

...The way he looks at things. Like he can't remember what they are... and doesn't particular care. This world... to him it's like a mist. And all the people are like shadows...

CUT TO:

75. INT. DREIBERG'S KITCHEN

DREIBERG has failed to notice that the kettle is boiling furiously, filling the kitchen with steam and obscuring our view of him and LAURIE.

LAURIE

... Just shadows in the fog.

DREIBERG leaps up and switches off the kettle.

CUT TO:

76. INT. MILITARY CENTRE - LIVING QUARTERS.

DR. MANHATTAN sits on the side of the bed, exercising his brain and making the clothes for his TV interview float out of the closet and hover in mid-air in front of him.

LAURIE (V.O.)

I mean, tonight, right...? I walked out after twenty years, and y'know what I bet he's doing? His big emotional reaction? He's either smartening up for his TV interview or watching Quarks get stuck to Gluinos. Maybe both.

DR. MANHATTAN stands up beside the bed and lifts his arms and legs in turn as his pants, trousers, socks, shirt, shoes, tie, etc. assemble themselves on his body.

CUT TO:

77. INT. DREIBERG'S KITCHEN

LAURIE

Dan, I'm sorry to...

DREIBERG

It's okay, it's okay. Don't worry. Here, drink this.

DREIBERG hands LAURIE a cup of coffee. She sips it, grimaces and puts it down

LAURIE

(making an effort to cheer up)
Let's go out and have dinner...

DREIBERG

(unused to spontaneity)
Oh...

LAURIE

... I haven't done that for ages. Come on. My things are at the station. I've got to look for a cheap hotel, but let's have dinner first.

DREIBERG

Er, okay.

LAURIE

I have to rethink my life... You're here today...

CUT TO:

78. INT. MILITARY RESEARCH CENTRE - LIVING QUARTERS

DR. MANHATTAN is standing dressed in his neat black suit. He adjusts his cuffs, concentrates his remarkable mind, and dematerializes.

LAURIE (V.O.)

... Gone tomorrow.

CUT TO:

79. EXT. STREET - EVENING

DREIBERG and LAURIE, walking down the street, pass the NEWS KIOSK where the NEWSVENDOR is talking animatedly to the BLACK KID who is reading his comic and ignoring him.

NEWSVENDOR

I'm a newsvendor Goddammit! I'm informed on the situation!... We oughta nuke 'em 'till they glow!

Continuing beyond the newskiosk, LAURIE and DREIBERG pass the red-haired STREET CRAZY who is standing with his "THE END IS NIGH" placard beneath a huge billboard. On the billboard is an advertisement for "NOSTALGIA by VEIDT", a perfume the motto of which is Where is the essence that was so divine.

LAURIE

Remember Captain Carnage?

DREIBERG

The guy who pretended to be a super-villain so he could get beaten up?

LAURIE

Yeh, whatever happened to him?

DREIBERG

He tried it on Rorschach and Rorschach dropped him down an elevator shaft.

LAURIE

(laughs)

That's terrible... Rorschach smashed your front door?

DREIBERG

Yup. Turned up to warn me...

CUT TO:

80. INT. TV STUDIO - LOBBY

DR MANHATTAN materializes in the lobby of a TV studio, causing the PROGRAMME COORDINATOR, FORBES, the military intelligence man, and a COUPLE OF RECEPTIONISTS and SECRETARIES to dive for cover.

DREIBERG (V.O.)
... completely out of the blue.

COORDINATOR

Jesus!!!

He picks himself up off the floor.

COORDINATOR (CONTD)

(irritated)

You haven't left us time for make-up.
Your blue is far too light for TV.

FORBES

(straightening his hair and tie)
Dr. Osterman, I'm Forbes, Army Intelligence.
Here's a list of no-go areas. Play it cool...

CUT TO:

81 EXT. STREET WITH JUNCTION INTO ALLEY - EVENING

DREIBERG and LAURIE, deep in conversation, turn off the main street into a dark alley. They are watched entering the alley by a group of STREET TOUGHS, their tinted hair tied up in knot-tops.

FORBES (V.O.)

... and try not to get into any tight corners.

CUT TO:

82 INT. TV STUDIO LOBBY

DR. MANHATTAN focusses his mind and changes the colour of his skin from light to dark blue.

DR. MANHATTAN

Is that dark enough?

COORDINATOR

(astonished)

My God!... Uh, yes... Perfect...

CUT TO:

83. EXT. STREET WITH JUNCTION INTO ALLEY - EVENING

The STREET TOUGHS exchange glances and begin to follow DREIBERG and LAURIE into the dark alley.

COORDINATOR (V.O.)

... That's certainly dark enough for our purposes.

CUT TO:

84. INT. TV STUDIO SOUND STAGE

DR. MANHATTAN, FORBES and the COORDINATOR enter a sound stage. TV cameras point at a set comprising, back-drop, table, chairs and an INTERVIEWER. Behind the TV cameras is a bank of AUDIENCE.

FORBES

(sotto voce to Manhattan)

If the Geneva talks come up, the position is the Soviets have to agree to exclude you from the agenda.

COORDINATOR

Shh. We're on.

He looks up at an OVERHEAD MONITOR. The "ABC NEWS SPECIAL REPORT" graphic is already on screen, with THEME MUSIC underneath.

85. INSERT - TV MONITOR

Stock footage. We open on a shot of terrified Viet Cong racing for their lives through dense jungle; the CAMERA WHIP PANS to the right and takes in an extraordinary sight.

A towering, ninety-foot-tall DR MANHATTAN strides blithely through the jungle, occasionally directing a blast from his finger tips at the greenery below. AMERICAN HUEYS hover behind him, spitting out bursts of automatic fire, performing mop-up duty as this one-man defoliation unit does his apocalyptic thing. A SUPERIMPOSED TITLE reads "VIETNAM 1965."

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Dr. Manhattan: the nuclear titan spawned in a freak scientific mishap. For more than twenty years the "Manhattan Option" has been the linchpin of America's conventional strategy -

We CUT to PRAGUE, where RUSSIAN TANKS are rolling through the broad thoroughfare. DR. MANHATTAN, only forty feet tall this time, rounds a corner and emerges from behind a municipal building.

His EYES gleam eerily, and the lead tank begins to HEAT UP, the grey gunmetal turning RED before our eyes. The hatch springs open, STEAM hisses, and TERRIFIED RUSSIAN SOLDIERS clamber out... only to be met by a barrage of rocks thrown by the local citizenry. Title reads: "CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1968."

ANNOUNCER (V.O. CONTD)

... in trouble spots from Vietnam to Czechoslovakia to Nicaragua: a one-man cavalry coming to the aid of our democratic allies, holding the Communist menace in check.

DANIEL ORTEGA, in Sandinista drabs, sits at a table across from American Secretary of State G. GORDON LIDDY. The two men shake hands, hold up a signed treaty for the camera. DR. MANHATTAN, in a three-piece suit, stands behind them, presiding over this historic accord. Title: "NICARAGUA. 1979."

ANNOUNCER (V.O. CONTD)

In the famous words of General William Westmoreland, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Superman - and thank God, he's American."

86. INT. TV STUDIO SOUNDSTAGE - A MOMENT LATER

INTERVIEWER

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the show.
As you can see...

CUT TO:

87. EXT. DARK ALLEY - EVENING.

DREIBERG and LAURIE are surrounded by a gang of STREET TOUGHS wielding, knives, chains, broken bottles etc.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

... we have something really special for you tonight.

CUT TO:

88. INT. TV STUDIO SOUNDSTAGE.

INTERVIEWER

In his first ever question and answer session let's have a big hand please for DOC MANHATTAN himself. DR. JONATHAN OSTERMAN.

The AUDIENCE applaud.

INTERVIEWER (CONTD)

Jon, I hope you'll forgive me for asking asking you this...

CUT TO:

89. EXT. DARK ALLEY - EVENING

DREIBERG and LAURIE back up against a wall as the STREET TOUGHS close in on them demanding money etc.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

... but, what's up, Doc?

The STUDIO AUDIENCE laugh. (V.O.)

CUT TO:

90. INT. TV STUDIO SOUNDSTAGE

DR MANHATTAN

(totally humourless)

"Up" is a relative concept. It has no intrinsic value.

INTERVIEWER

Uhh... Right! Okay! So let's get on with the questions. You, over there...

The INTERVIEWER points into the audience where a WOMAN stands up.

WOMAN

Doc, if the reds act up in Afghanistan...

CUT TO:

91. EXT. DARK ALLEY - EVENING

DREIBERG and LAURIE are about to be savaged by the STREET TOUGHS who are closing in tight.

WOMAN (V.O.)

... will you be prepared to enter hostilities?

DREIBERG and LAURIE exchange desperate looks which seem to contain an agreement. DREIBERG takes off his glasses and slips them into his pocket.

The STUDIO AUDIENCE applaud vigorously. (SOUND OVER)

CUT TO:

92. INT. TV STUDIO SOUNDSTAGE

DR. MANHATTAN

The current situation in Afghanistan does not require my attention.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, fine.

(pointing into audience)

Now, how about you over there? Yes, you, sir. And...

CUT TO:

93. EXT. FLASHBACK - PROCESSED FOOTAGE. DARK ALLEY - EVENING.

Slow-mo, double-frame or sepia tone. Whatever the gimmick, it should suggest that the events we're watching take place in a stylized dream-time, midway between flashback and fantasy.

DREIBERG and LAURIE now transformed into NIGHT OWL and SILK SPECTRE swing into impressive action, instantly disabling a couple of HOODS

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

... let's try and keep it snappy.

CUT TO:

94. INT. TV STUDIO SOUNDSTAGE

DOUG ROTH is standing in the audience asking a question. He has a label on his lapel reading "PRESS."

DOUG ROTH

I'm Doug Roth, I write for Nova Express.
Wally Weaver. Back in the early sixties the
newspapers called him Dr. Manhattan's buddy.
He died of cancer in 1971...

CUT TO:

95. EXT. FLASHBACK - PROCESSED FOOTAGE. DARK ALLEY - EVENING.

NIGHT OWL and SILK SPECTRE are really laying into the HOODS. NIGHT OWL disarms one, smashes another in the face and then knocks their heads together. SILK SPECTRE kicks one in the balls and slams another against the wall.

DOUG ROTH (V.O.)

...I believe it was sudden and quite painful.

CUT TO:

96. INT. TV STUDIO SOUNDSTAGE - EVENING

DR. MANHATTAN

That's true.

DOUG ROTH

Let me go on. Stephanie Boris, William Charles Batts, Susan White. Are you aware that these "friends" and "associates" all have cancer?...

A murmur runs through the AUDIENCE.

CUT TO:

97. EXT. FLASHBACK - PROCESSED FOOTAGE. DARK ALLEY - EVENING.

SILK SPECTRE throws a HOOD so that his head jams between railings on a fire-escape. NIGHT OWL picks one up and stuffs him head-first into a garbage container.

DOUG ROTH (V.O.)

... None of them is well today.

CUT TO:

98. INT. TV STUDIO SOUNDSTAGE - EVENING

DOUG ROTH

Did you know that Ms Janey Slater, linked romantically with you in the sixties is currently suffering from lung cancer? Doctors have given her six months to live.

The AUDIENCE noise builds. Even the INTERVIEWER's taken aback. He gapes at DR. MANHATTAN who sits there silently, his inhuman face an unreadable mask.

DOUG ROTH (CONTD)
Notice any connection?

CUT TO:

99. EXT. FLASHBACK - PROCESSED FOOTAGE. DARK ALLEY - EVENING.

NIGHT OWL deals with his last HOOD, administering a mighty punch which sends the hapless mugger sailing high into the air before falling back to join his unconscious colleagues. SILK SPECTRE, likewise down to her last opponent, kicks him in the throat then opens a man-hole cover down which he obligingly falls.

DOUG ROTH (V.O.)
... Because from where I'm standing, it's starting to look pretty conclusive.

CUT TO:

100. INT. TV STUDIO SOUNDSTAGE - EVENING.

DR. MANHATTAN is shaken. The AUDIENCE is in uproar.

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

FORBES, seeing that things are getting out of control, rushes forward and stops the proceedings.

FORBES
Okay! That's it! No more questions!
The Doctor's tired!...
(aside to Interviewer)
Let me remind you, we have editorial veto here!
(to audience)
Sorry about this folks...

CUT TO:

101. EXT. FLASHBACK - PROCESSED FOOTAGE . DARK ALLEY - EVENING.

SILK SPECTRE and NIGHT OWL look around with satisfaction at the prostrate HOODS. NIGHT OWL puts his hand, apparently in a gesture of solidarity, on SILK SPECTRE's shoulder.

FORBES (V.O.)
... but the show's over.

CUT TO:

102. INT. TV STUDIO SOUNDSTAGE - EVENING

DR. MANHATTAN is being hustled out of the studio by FORBES. They are surrounded by the AUDIENCE and PRESS and have to push their way through.

TINA PRICE

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

ROD CAGE

Rod Cage. L.A. Times. Dr. Osterman, do you believe you cause cancer?

RANDOM NEWSMEN

Dr. Manhattan. Do you cause cancer? Is it true? How many people close to you have died of cancer?

JIM WEISS

Doc. Jim Weiss. The Enquirer. Do you think you gave Ms Slater cancer by sleeping with her?

DR. MANHATTAN

(appalled)

No. Please. If you'll let me through...

FORBES

Let him through! He's not here to answer questions on intimate moments!

CUT TO:

103. EXT. DARK ALLEY - EVENING

DREIBERG and LAURIE are leaning against a wall, breathing heavily, recovering from their exertions. All around them are unconscious STREET TOUGHS. DREIBERG becomes aware of the fact that his hand is on LAURIE's shoulder. He is on the verge of making the next move.

CUT TO:

104. INT. TV STUDIO SCOUNDSTAGE - EVENING.

The PRESS are crowding in on DR. MANHATTAN and FORBES, pushing microphones into DR. MANHATTAN's face.

DOUG ROTH

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

DR. MANHATTAN

Please... Just go away and leave me alone.

FORBES

(aware of how agitated Dr. Manhattan is)
Ladies and Gentlemen, I think it's safest not to pursue this line of thinking...

CUT TO:

105. EXT. DARK ALLEY - EVENING

DREIBERG's nerve fails and he lifts his hand from LAURIE's shoulder and reaches for his glasses. LAURIE lights a cigarette.

CUT TO:

106. INT. TV STUDIO SOUNDSTAGE

DR. MANHATTAN and FORBES are now unable to move on account of the crush of PEOPLE. DR. MANHATTAN reaches critical mass.

DR. MANHATTAN
I said LEAVE ME ALONE! GO HOME!

Instantly EVERYONE in the studio disappears leaving DR. MANHATTAN on his own. He calms himself down, checks his watch and then dematerializes.

CUT TO:

107. EXT. STREET WITH TURNING INTO DARK ALLEY - EVENING

DREIBERG and LAURIE emerge from the alley into the street. They both look shaken.

LAURIE
I just lost my appetite.

DREIBERG
Me too.

LAURIE
I guess I ought to go find a hotel...
I'm a bit wiped out... Jesus, us getting
mugged.

DREIBERG
Er, listen... You know... There's, uh,
there's always my place.

LAURIE
Oh, I couldn't impose...

DREIBERG
You wouldn't be... really... I have lots of
room there... I mean, we're friends... We're
both in the same line... We're both, uhh, we're
both...

LAURIE
We're both leftovers.

She takes him by the arm.

CUT TO:

108. INT. MILITARY RESEARCH CENTRE - SPECIAL TALENT LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT

A SOLDIER is stencilling a warning onto the door leading to DR. MANHATTAN's living quarters. The warning consists of nuclear symbol and the words, DANGER QUARANTINE AREA. The SOLDIER is whistling happily. Suddenly, DR. MANHATTAN materializes behind him, casting a shadow at the foot of the door. The SOLDIER turns.

SOLDIER

(jumping)

WAAAGH!... I'm sorry Dr. Osterman. You startled me. I was just painting up this warning... as, as ordered. After the TV show... they thought it better to comply with safety regulations.

DR. MANHATTAN

I see. It seems I'm a danger... emotionally... physically... (beat) Please tell Ms Juspeczyk and your superiors that I've left.

SOLDIER

(uncomprehending)

Left?

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes. For Arizona first, and then Mars.

SOLDIER

Mars...?

(laughs)

Hey, Doc, you really had me going there... Y'know, you're a reg'lar kinda...

DR. MANHATTAN dematerializes, leaving his suit standing empty for a moment before it collapses in a heap.

SOLDIER

(stunned)

...guy.

CUT TO:

109. INT. LAURIE'S BEDROOM - DREIBERG'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

LAURIE is in bed, asleep. A slight breeze moves a curtain. She stirs.

CUT TO:

110. INT. DREIBERG'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

DREIBERG is lying in bed, asleep. SOMEBODY opens the door and steals in. They approach the bed, then suddenly throw something onto DREIBERG's chest. DREIBERG grunts, struggles awake, and switches on the bedside light.

We now see, lying on top of the bed, a copy of the GAZETTE. The banner headline reads: DR. MANHATTAN LEAVES EARTH: EAST-WEST ARMS BALANCE COLLAPSE.

DREIBERG

Whaa?...

RORSCHACH

Good morning, Night Owl. Brought you your Sunday paper.

DREIBERG

(tetchily)

Daniel Dreiberg... Dan.

He rubs his eyes and stares at the headline.

RORSCHACH

The Comedian murdered. Dr. Manhattan exiled... Two of us gone in one week. Who's next? You? Me? Silk Spectre?... I see she's staying here.

DREIBERG

Laurie, uh, yes. For the time being.

RORSCHACH

You need a stronger lock. That one broke after one shove.

DREIBERG

(dismayed)

My new lock!

RORSCHACH lifts DREIBERG's bottle of NOSTALGIA from the dressing table and slides it into his pocket. He makes for the door.

RORSCHACH

Poor choice. Get more expensive one. Can't be too security conscious. Especially these days.

RORSCHACH exits leaving DREIBERG looking anxiously at the GAZETTE.

111. EXT. OUTER SPACE.

We're hurtling through the starry void, towards MARS. The red planet looms larger and larger, finally dominating the frame as we descend toward the chaotic terrain of the Martian surface. Individual features of the landscape grow gradually more distinct: vast canyons, oceans of fog, volcanoes the size of Missouri. Herschel's famous canali. And finally, the argyre planitia, an enormous shallow crater, its rocky rim encircling two jutting blue mountains, and to the south, a ragged, semicircular ridge.

Two eyes, a big broad smile. It looks uncannily like a happy-face.

CUT TO:

112. EXT. SURFACE OF MARS.

Red hills, valleys, mountains, to the horizon. Above the horizon, black space studded with brilliant stars. A BLUE SPLIT opens in the sky, a few inches above the Martian surface. DR. MANHATTAN steps through onto the sand, stirring up red dust. The slit closes behind him.

DR KISSINGER (V.O.)

Mr. President, the Soviets may now feel tempted to invade Afghanistan. And if they were to then continue into Pakistan, it's almost certain they'll try taking Western Europe.

GENERAL (V.O.)

Mr. President, we must do something to indicate that Manhattan's desertion has not weakened our resolve.

PRESIDENT NIXON (V.O.)

Huh. If he'd wanted to live on a red planet, he should have stayed at home.

CUT TO:

113. INT. PENTAGON WAR ROOM

NIXON, KISSINGER, GORDON LIDDY, GENERALS, SPECIAL ADVISORS, TECHNICIANS, and etc. are sitting at a table covered with telephones. On the wall in front of them is a huge screen carrying a multi-coloured computer map of the world. Afghanistan is covered with a flashing red circle.

NIXON

Well, General. Tell me more.

GENERAL

We can be ready for a first strike within seven days. I'd advise against leaving it longer. We have a 54% chance of wiping them out before half their birds are airborne.

CUT TO:

114. EXT. SURFACE OF MARS

DR. MANHATTAN is walking across a completely empty, arid, pink plain, leaving behind him an enormous cloud of pink dust.

GENERAL (V.O.)

I'm talking total devastation.

CUT TO:

115. INT. PENTAGON WAR ROOM.

NIXON

Hmm. Would our losses be acceptable?

ANALYST

I'm running a program for that scenario now, sir.

On the map coloured arrows appear from within the Soviet Union. Some make their way to Europe where they stop and become flashing circles indicating explosions, others continue towards the U.S.A.

ANALYST

There we are. Britain down, Germany down...

KISSINGER

Is that some heading for our East Coast? At this point in our contingency plans, where should we be?

CUT TO:

116. EXT. SURFACE OF MARS

DR. MANHATTAN continues to walk across the Martian surface. He is looking at the stars and holding a photograph in his hand.

NIXON (V.O.)

Somewhere else, Henry.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

I am watching the stars. Halley's comet tumbles through the solar system on its great seventy-six-year elipse. My father admired the sky for its precision. He repaired watches.

CUT TO:

117. INT. BLACK VELVET SURFACE WITH WATCH PIECES.

Close shot of a black velvet watch-repairer's cloth. On the cloth are the innards of a watch; cogs, springs, ratchets, screws, etc. A HAND enters from below and pushes the pieces around with the tip of a fine screwdriver.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

It's 1945. I sit in a Brooklyn kitchen, fascinated by an arrangement of cogs on black velvet. I am sixteen years old.

CUT TO:

118. EXT. SURFACE OF MARS.

DR. MANHATTAN sits on a rock and looks at the photograph in his hand.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

This is a photograph of Janey Slater
and me. At an amusement park in 1959.

CUT TO:

119. EXT. SURFACE OF MARS - SHOT OF PHOTOGRAPH IN SAND.

The photograph lies on the pink sand. Behind and in front of it are
DR. MANHATTAN's footprints.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

In twelve seconds time I drop the photograph
and walk away. It's already lying there twelve
seconds' into the future. Ten seconds now.

CUT TO:

120. EXT. SURFACE OF MARS.

DR. MANHATTAN is sitting on the rock looking at the photograph.

DR. MANHATTAN

The photograph is in my hand. I took it
from the derelict bar at the Arizona test
base, fourteen hours ago.

CUT TO:

121. INT. ARIZONA TEST BASE - DERELICT BAR - NIGHT.

DR. MANHATTAN is standing in the debris of rotting bar furniture
looking at the photograph which is pinned to a crumbling notice board.
Moonlight floods in from broken windows and holes in the roof.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

I'm still there, looking at it. Fourteen
hours into the past.

CUT TO:

122. INT. ARIZONA TEST BASE - BAR - 1959 - DAY

It's 1959. The bar is in full swing and notice board is new. JANEY
SLATER, the woman in the photograph, is in her mid-twenties. She pins
the photograph to the top of the board, above other pictures, postcards
and notices. Having done this she turns back, smiling, to someone
behind CAMERA.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

It's August 1959. Janey is pinning the
photograph to the notice board.

CUT TO:

123. INSERT - CLOSE-UP OF PHOTOGRAPH HELD BY DR. MANHATTAN.

The picture is of JON OSTERMAN at thirty years of age and JANEY in her mid-twenties. They are smiling into the camera. Behind them is a Ferris wheel. JANEY is taking popcorn from a pack which JON is holding.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

The photograph is in my hand. It was taken on the day Janey broke her watch.

CUT TO:

124. EXT. SURFACE OF MARS.

DR. MANHATTAN is sitting on his rock looking at the photograph.

DR. MANHATTAN

It's October 1985. I'm on Mars. It's July 1959. I'm in New Jersey at the Palisades Amusement Park.

CUT TO:

125. INT. ARIZONA TEST BASE - BAR - 1959 - DAY.

It's August 1959. DR. OSTERMAN and JANEY SLATER are sitting together at a table, having a drink. Other SCIENTISTS are standing at the bar and drinking at other tables.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

It's August 1959. We've been back from New Jersey a month. In the future the accident is waiting for me.

JANEY

Jon? Did you fix my watch?

JON

Yes. Matter of fact, I did.

He feels in his pockets.

JON (CONTD)

I left it in my lab coat.

He gets up.

JANEY

It's okay, no hurry.

JON

(eager to please)

Two minutes.

He goes.

CUT TO:

126. INT. INTRINSIC FIELD CENTER - DAY

JON steps into a large pre-fabricated building full of machinery covered with pipes and dials. He looks around for his lab coat, sees it through the window of a small, thick-walled, test chamber, pulls the heavy door open a fraction and slides inside. As he does so a warning light on the door begins to flash and it swings back into place and locks.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

I go to the Intrinsic Field Center.
I see my coat inside the test chamber.
The accident is almost upon me now.

CUT TO:

127. INT. TEST CHAMBER - DAY

From inside the test chamber we see JANEY SLATER, DR. GLASS and other SCIENTISTS arriving and looking in through the observation window. JON laughs and waves to them. They all look appalled.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

The others return from lunch and I ask them to let me out, laughing at my own stupidity. Nobody else is laughing. Dr. Glass is turning white.

JON begins to panic. He shouts through the thick glass window.

JON

My God! Let me out! Can't you let me out?

DR GLASS

(shouting back)

The program's locked in! We can't override the time lock! It... It's a safety feature!

CUT TO:

128. INT. INTRINSIC FIELD CENTER - OUTSIDE TEST CHAMBER - DAY

JON, terrified, is looking out of chamber at the others.

JON

(distant through glass)

For God's sake! Are you saying you can't stop this thing?

JANEY SLATER freaks out and is escorted from the building by a fellow SCIENTIST.

JANEY

JON! JON! Help him! Do something!
Oh God! No! Let me out of here! I can't watch this!

CUT TO:

129. INT. TEST CHAMBER - DAY

Shields slides back from the particle cannons aimed at a concrete block in the center of the chamber. JON watches in horror. From outside, DR. GLASS and the other SCIENTISTS look in, appalled but fascinated. The chamber begins to fill with a blue iridescent light.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

I hear the shields sliding back from the particle cannons. The air is growing warm. All the atoms in the test chamber are screaming at once. The light... The light is taking me to pieces.

JON OSTERMAN's back arches. His arms go up. His face is a mask of agony. A moment later his skin is gone. A black skeleton, like a photographic negative, stands in his place. The skeleton then bursts into its constituent atoms. The iridescent blue light has quite literally taken Jon Osterman to pieces.

Following this event the test chamber is empty. JON's fellow SCIENTISTS peer in horror through the window and then back slowly away.

CUT TO:

130. INT. ARIZONA TEST BASE - MEN'S ROOM

TWO SCIENTISTS are washing their hands and faces at the sinks.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

It's September.

SCIENTIST A

Did you read about this communist guy who's running Cuba? This Castro?

SCIENTIST B

I saw his picture! Jesus H. Christ! What's wrong with guys these days? That beard!

They glance into the mirror where they see, behind them, a hideous thing coalescing in mid-air: a brain, eyes, a dangling spinal cord, wriggling neurons - a gruesome, disembodied central nervous system.

They turn, screaming, just in time to see the thing evaporate in a haze of shimmering blue light.

CUT TO:

131. EXT. ARIZONA TEST BASE - MAIN GATE - NIGHT

Two armed SENTRIES are on guard duty.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

It's October.

A partially-muscled skeleton appears by the perimeter fence and screams for several seconds before vanishing. The terrified SENTRIES fire their sten guns and run.

CUT TO:

132. INT. BLACK VELVET SURFACE WITH WATCH PIECES

Close shot of a black velvet watch-repairer's cloth. On the cloth are the innards of a watch; cogs, springs, etc. A HAND pushes the pieces around with the tip of a fine screwdriver.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

It's just a question of reassembling the components in the correct sequence...

CUT TO:

133. INT. ARIZONA TEST BASE REFECTORY - NIGHT

JANEY and WALLY WEAVER are having dinner.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

It's November.

JANEY

I'm thinking of quitting this place...
It's like we're being haunted...

WALLY

We should all get away for a while. Hey,
can you hear some kind of whistling?

Indeed she can, and within moments it builds to a deafening whine. JANEY's hair stands on end. EVERYONE in the refectory is experiencing the same thing. UTENSILS rise from tables and drift magically into the air. The overhead lights blow out and a brilliant blue glow suffuses the room. All eyes turn towards the source of the glow... the fully formed figure of DR. MANHATTAN, floating above them, nude, hands spread like some majestic blue messiah. Metal trays and utensils hover in the air around him, throwing off sparks.

JANEY recognizes him instantly. Her hands go to her mouth and she lets out a horrible endless shriek.

JANEY

JONNNN!!!!

CUT TO:

134. EXT. SURFACE OF MARS.

DR. MANHATTAN is sitting on his rock looking at the photograph. He gets up.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

I'm tired of looking at the photograph now.

He drops the photograph.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

I open my fingers. It falls to the sand at my feet.

He steps over the photograph and walks away.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

I am going to look at the stars. They are so far away, and their light takes so long to reach us...

CUT TO:

135. EXT. SURFACE OF MARS - SHOT OF PHOTOGRAPH IN SAND.

The photograph lies on the pink sand. Behind and in front of it are DR. MANHATTAN's footprints.

DR. MANHATTAN (V.O.)

... All we ever see of the stars are their old photographs.

CUT TO:

136. EXT. BASE OF VEIDT TOWER - EARLY EVENING.

The tradesmens entrance to the VEIDT TOWER. This consists of a walled yard enclosing a couple of steel and concrete legs of the tower. The yard is entered through high gates and encloses the air-conditioning plant, garbage bins clustering around a garbage chute, and a couple of OZYMANDIAS, VEIDT INDUSTRIES, delivery vans. It's raining.

Lurking in the shadows between the bins is RORSCHACH. He looks up at the tower, takes his harpoon-grappling-gun out of his raincoat, releases the safety-catch, aims the gun vertically above his head and pulls the trigger. A harpoon-grappling-iron shoots up the side of the tower trailing a wire behind it which unravels from the gun. After a few moments we hear, from above, a distant breaking of glass. RORSCHACH takes cover. A couple of moments later shards of broken glass land in the yard. RORSCHACH tugs on the wire, making sure that it's taut, and then begins his ascent.

RORSCHACH (V.O. above)

Only one person could kill Comedian...
Adrian Veidt... Always knew... in my bones.
Who made Manhattan "smartest" man on Mars?...
Adrian Veidt... Now undisputably "smartest" man
on earth... Couldn't take competition...
"Ozymandias, king of kings - look on his works
ye mighty and despair."... What lame excuses, Adrian?
What weasel words?... Too late... I'm on my way.

CUT TO:

137. EXT. TWO THIRDS OF THE WAY UP OUTSIDE OF VEIDT TOWER - EARLY EVENING

RORSCHACH is hauling himself up the outside of the Veidt Tower. The wind is blowing and the rain lashing. As he continues upwards he sees, through the glass, VEIDT and his SECRETARY shooting down past him in a transparent elevator.

RORSCHACH

Shit!

He begins to descend.

CUT TO:

138. EXT. ONE THIRD OF THE WAY UP OUTSIDE OF THE VEIDT TOWER - EARLY EVENING

RORSCHACH is absailing down the outside of the tower when he sees, through a window, VEIDT and his SECRETARY leave the elevator. RORSCHACH stops and watches.

CUT TO:

139. INT. VEIDT TOWER ATRIUM - EARLY EVENING

VEIDT and his SECRETARY step out of the elevator into a magnificent atrium, full of marble columns, fountains, palm trees, etc. An Egyptian pleasure garden. EXECUTIVES and OFFICE STAFF are bustling about. VEIDT and SECRETARY walk across the floor of the atrium.

VEIDT

I want to see the Ozymandias action-figure line achieve a higher market profile. There's always an increased demand for war-toys during periods of international tension. Let's go for it.

An "EXECUTIVE" carrying a briefcase against his chest, crosses in front of VEIDT.

"EXECUTIVE"

Mr. Veidt?

VEIDT stops as the "EXECUTIVE" lowers his brief-case, revealing a gun.

SECRETARY

Oh God! Look out!

The "EXECUTIVE" shoots. VEIDT dives. The bullet catches the SECRETARY in the gut and comes out the other side in a spray of blood. With gymnast's agility VEIDT rolls to one side and comes up with a BRASS ASHTRAY in his hands.

He swings it into the "EXECUTIVE'S" ribs, knocking him backwards into a FOUNTAIN. The GUN skitters away across the marble floor.

As SECURITY STAFF race up, VEIDT steps into the fountain and slams the dazed "EXECUTIVE'S" head into a decorative head of King Tut.

VEIDT

Son of a bitch! Who sent you?

Arms flying, the two men grapple. VEIDT grabs hold of the "EXECUTIVE'S" hair and thrusts a hand into his mouth.

SECURITY GUARD

Stand back, Mr. Veidt! We'll handle it!

VEIDT

He's got some kind of poison capsule!
Don't bite down, you scum, I want to know
who sent you!

The "EXECUTIVE" gags and goes limp. His lifeless body slumps into the water. VEIDT steps out, shaken and breathless.

CUT TO:

140. EXT. ONE THIRD OF THE WAY UP OUTSIDE OF VEIDT TOWER - EARLY EVENING

RORSCHACH is peering intensely through the window.

RORSCHACH

Hurm...

He continues his descent.

CUT TO:

141. INT. DREIBERG'S KITCHEN - DAY

Dreiberg's kitchen. The steel door to the basement/garage is open.

LAURIE (O.V.)

Dan?

LAURIE enters from the hall. She's wearing her coat and is carrying a bunch of flowers. She goes to the steel door and calls down.

LAURIE

Dan?

DREIBERG

(from basement)

Hello! I'll be right up!

LAURIE begins to unwrap the flowers. She finds a vase and sets it on the table. She then opens a couple of drawers in search for scissors. She finds a pair and is on the point of closing the drawer when something inside catches her eye. She lifts out a framed picture. This is the photograph of herself in Silk Spectre gear. She studies it for a moment before hearing DREIBERG coming up the stairs. She replaces the photograph in the drawer. DREIBERG enters. He is in his shirt sleeves and his hands are covered with axle grease.

DREIBERG

(anxious)

What did they say? Are you clear?

LAURIE

Fit as a fiddle. No cancer, nothing.

DREIBERG

(much relieved)

Thank God for that.

LAURIE

I wonder if Jon was responsible for the others?

(noticing Dreiberg's hands)

What have you been doing?

DREIBERG

(preoccupied)

Fiddling around with the Owlship.

LAURIE

Does that thing still work?

DREIBERG

Sure. Listen, did you hear about Adrian?

LAURIE

No. What?

DREIBERG

Somebody took a shot at him.

LAURIE

My God! Is he hurt?

DREIBERG

No, he's fine. The gunman's dead - took a suicide capsule.

LAURIE

Jesus! Rorschach's right.

DREIBERG

(agitated)

Yup. Look, from now on, stay away from the windows, and don't put lights on anywhere without closing the curtains first. And when you close the curtains do it on your hands and knees... Just take care while we think this out. Okay?

LAURIE

(meeting his gaze)

You too.

CUT TO:

142. INSERT - TV SCREEN.

The latest bad news from half a world away:

NEWS ANCHOR

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan the situation grows more tense by the hour.

On a television map of Afghanistan RED RUSSIAN ARROWS are bouncing against the Afghanistan border.

NEWS ANCHOR (CONTD)

With Russian forces massing on the border, Pakistan today called on the US to intervene. President Nixon has placed America's European military installations on full alert.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK placing us in -

143. INT. DREIBERG'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT.

LAURIE is sitting on the floor watching the TV with concern. The coffee-table beside her is littered with dirty dishes. DREIBERG enters with coffee on a tray.

DREIBERG

My God. Now that Jon's gone it's all turning to rat shit.

LAURIE

Dan, maybe we ought to do something.

DREIBERG

(setting down coffee)

Do something? What do you mean?

LAURIE gets up and paces the room.

LAURIE

I don't know... Kidnap Nixon, or the Soviet President... Something... Anything to break the pattern... Jesus, Dan, we're on the verge of nuclear oblivion... Maybe we should call Adrian... get together... Before somebody shoots us... We got into this stupid costumed hero business to try and make the world a better place... okay it sounds infantile and we failed totally... but maybe now we could make a difference!... Christ! Nobody else seems to be trying...

LAURIE subsides onto a sofa.

DREIBERG

(low)

I know... I know the feeling... Fact is, Laurie, there isn't anything we can do...

LAURIE
(thoughtful)
You said the Owlship still works.

DREIBERG
Well... Yes and no. I mean... it wouldn't
be safe.

LAURIE
(sympathetically)
You've really lost your nerve, Dan, haven't
you?

DREIBERG
(wryly)
What nerve?

LAURIE comes over and puts her arms around DREIBERG.

DREIBERG (CONTD)
I'm sorry.

LAURIE
(gently)
Don't be... It was just a stupid idea.

DREIBERG, embarrassed by LAURIE's attention, indicates the TV on which
a familiar COMMERCIAL THEME is playing.

On the TV, a young woman sits at her vanity and gazes lovingly at a
wedding picture.

DREIBERG
Look, Adrian's ad.

TV CHORUS
Oh my darling, it's incredible
That someone so unforgettable...

CUT TO:

144. INT. TENEMENT FLAT - NIGHT

MOLOCH's apartment. THE SAME COMMERCIAL is blaring from the TV as
RORSCHACH lets himself in.

TV CHORUS
... Should think I am unforgettable too.

RORSCHACH strolls down the hall towards the source of the light and noise.

RORSCHACH (V.O.)
Got message from Moloch... He remembered
something... Thought he might.

He pushes open the living-room door.

PORSCHACH

Moloch?

No reply from MOLOCH, who sits in an easy chair, his back to camera, seemingly glued to the tube. PORSCHACH casts a cautious glance around the room and advances stealthily toward the chair. Onscreen, the WOMAN at the vanity opens a jar and smears LIME-GREEN GOO on her face.

TV ANNOUNCER

The years melt away with NOSTALGIA. Use it once a week - and wrinkles vanish overnight. Medically tested, non-habit-forming NOSTALGIA is the patented beauty cream that actually reverses the aging process...

PORSCHACH

Moloch?

He creeps up-behind MOLOCH and lays a hand on his shoulder.

REVERSE ANGLE - ON MOLOCH

staring at the TV screen with sightless eyes. There's a NEAT ROUND BULLET-HOLE in the center of his forehead. PORSCHACH sees it and spins on his heels, anticipating an ambush -

TV ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

For the smooth young face he'll never forget...

CUT TO:

145. INT. DREIBERG'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

LAURIE is flipping through DREIBERG's record collection.

TV ANNOUNCER

... turn back the clock with NOSTALGIA...
from Veidt Industries.

DREIBERG

No wonder Adrian's rich. You use that stuff?

LAURIE

Sure. It works. I mean, look at this face, Daniel. I'm seventy-nine years old!

DREIBERG

(smiles)

I don't mind getting older. I'm obsolete anyway. Why try to hide it?

LAURIE

I like the way you look.

(beat)

It's strange with Jon. He doesn't age. His face doesn't change. But you, Daniel, you look...

DREIBERG

Old?

LAURIE

Not at all. You look very... "dashing."
I'm not so sure about your record collection
though. Nellie Lutcher? Louis Jordan?
Who are these people?

DREIBERG

I told you I was a little out of step.

LAURIE

(standing up)

Here, you pick one.

DREIBERG

... What?

LAURIE

Pick a record. I feel like dancing.

LAURIE's tone is unmistakably flirtatious. DREIBERG hesitates, then, with a noncommittal smile, he moves to the record cabinet.

CUT TO:

146. INT. TENEMENT FLAT - NIGHT

RORSCHACH making a hasty exit. An AMPLIFIED VOICE booms out:

LOUDSPEAKER

RORSCHACH! THIS IS THE CIVIL TERRORISM
UNIT. YOU HAVE ONE MINUTE TO COME OUT.

He goes to the window and peeks through the blinds. On the street outside, BUBBLE CARS are massing, blocking off the intersection. A CTU SWAT TEAM prepares to raid the building.

LOUDSPEAKER

YOU WON'T BE HARMED. COME OUT. IT'S ALL
OVER.

He's walked into a trap. As he lets the blinds fall, ALL SOUND DIES - and a bouncy, tinkling PIANO THEME comes up underneath.

CUT TO:

147. INT. DREIBERG'S SITTING-ROOM - NIGHT

The PIANO MUSIC emanates from DREIBERG's stereo: an old Fats Waller tune, "S'posin'." He's slow dancing with LAURIE, their faces illuminated by the cold blue flicker of the television. With a smile she reaches up to remove his glasses, then deposits them in his shirt pocket.

Dreamily, she rests her head on his shoulder. Her nearness is making him nervous. She pauses in mid-step and takes his face in her hands. He tries

to look away, but she pulls his face around - so that he can't avoid her gaze any longer - and plants a soft kiss on his mouth.

The PIANO INTRO ends, and Fat's teasing vocal begins:

S'posin' I should fall in love with you...
Do you think that you could love me too...

148. INT. TENEMENT - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT (MOS)

SONG CONTINUES UNDERNEATH, cheerful soundtrack accompaniment to an horrific silent movie. RORSCHACH races out of the bathroom carrying a plastic MOP-BUCKET, plus an armload of bottles and aerosol cans - ordinary household supplies. He enters the kitchen, rummages around under the sink, finds another handful of bottles: cleaning fluid, rubbing alcohol, Drano.

Almost as an afterthought he moves to the gas stove, turns on all the burners, and BLOWS OUT the FLAMES.

S'posin' I should hug you and caress you...
Would it impress you?...

149. INT. TENEMENT - FRONT STAIRWELL - THAT MOMENT (MOS)

A contingent of ARMED CTU MEN rushing silently up the stairs.

Or would it distress you? Hmm?

150. INT. TENEMENT - THAT MOMENT (MOS)

RORSCHACH dousing the living room carpet with charcoal lighter and rubbing alcohol. There's a pile of bottles, only half emptied, resting next to the front door. The CTU COPS are pounding on the front door, trying to creak it down. RORSCHACH crouches in the hallway just outside the living room.

The door finally gives way, and the COPS tumble in. RORSCHACH strikes a match and holds it to the nozzle of the AEROSOL CAN, creating a miniature FLAMETHROWER. The COPS' heads swivel just as the puddle on the carpet catches - and a moment later, the PILE OF BOTTLES EXPLODES, engulfing the doorway in flames.

S'posin' I should say for you I yearn...
(Yeah I yearn. Sure I do.)
Would you think I'm speaking out of turn?...

151. INT. DREIBERG'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

DREIBERG and LAURIE horizontal on the sofa, their clothes in disarray. LAURIE kisses him hungrily - but he's distant, panicky, unable to respond. It's been a long time for him. It's not going well.

S'posin' I declare it.
 Would you take my love and share it?
 I'm not s'posin', I'm in love with you...

He wriggles beneath her. She takes his hand, presses it onto her breast.

152. INT. TENEMENT - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT (MOS)

INSTRUMENTAL BRIDGE continues UNDERNEATH as RORSCHACH backs through the kitchen with his bucket. SMOKE billows in from the living room.

He empties TWO BOTTLES OF COOKING OIL on the linoleum floor. Then he ducks through a door into the BACK STAIRWELL.

153. INT. STAIRWELL LANDING - A MOMENT LATER (MOS)

RORSCHACH opens a bottle of CLEANING FLUID, stuffs a wad of newspaper into its neck. The first wave of COPS, coughing and hacking from the smoke, makes it into the kitchen just as he IGNITES his molotov cocktail and TOSSES IT INSIDE.

The COPS pitch backwards as the bottle blows up. By the time they hit the floor, the COOKING OIL has burst into flame.

RORSCHACH bolts up the stairs; by now, another squad of CTU MEN is coming up the back way behind him.

154. INT. TENEMENT KITCHEN - A MOMENT LATER (MOS)

Charred COPS, leaping FLAMES. CAMERA ZEROES IN on the GAS STOVE.

155. EXT. TENEMENT - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT (MOS)

A GAPING HOLE blows open in the front of the building. FIERY RUBBLE hails down on the CTU units outside. Re-enter Fats on vocals:

S'posin I should hug and caress you?...
 Would it impress you?...

156. INT. DREIBERG'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

LAURIE is fumbling with DREIBERG's pants. Finally he can't stand it any more and with a pained, stricken, look he pushes her away and sits up on the sofa. His head sinks into his hands. At first she doesn't understand; then her face softens, and she moves to his side, embracing his shoulders, gently stroking his hair.

...Or would it distress you?...

157. INT. TENEMENT - BACK STAIRWELL - THAT MOMENT (MOS)

RORSCHACH huddled on the uppermost landing, just below roof level. By now the whole building is ablaze. Two flights down, a pair of CTU COPS are fighting their way through the inferno, still on his tail.

He still has his mop bucket; it's half-full of water. He reaches for his last can, a can of DRANO, and empties into the bucket where it begins to HISS and SIZZLE.

S'posin' I should say for you I yearn...
Would you think I'm speaking out of turn...

The COPS are almost on him, racing upwards two steps at a time. He steps out in front of them, and - before they can hoist their weapons - HEAVES THE BUCKETFUL OF BOILING DRANO into their faces.

The COPS SHRIEK SOUNDLESSLY and topple backwards into the flames as RORSCHACH turns tail and bursts through the door to the roof.

158. EXT. TENEMENT ROOF - A MOMENT LATER - NIGHT

RORSCHACH emerges - and a BLINDING LIGHT catches him full in the face. Hovering not twenty feet overhead is a POLICE AIRSHIP. A spray of MACHINE-GUN FIRE peppers the roof.

S'posin' I declare it.
Would you take my love and share it?...

RORSCHACH scuttles along the edge of the roof, finds a rickety FIRE ESCAPE, and dives over. Unfortunately, he's now exposed on the front of the building - pinned to the wall by gunfire from the SWAT TEAM on the street. TONGUES OF FLAME dart from nearby windows. He turns and tries to climb back up, but more COPS, from the just landed AIRSHIP, are already spilling over the edge of the roof.

I ain't s'posin', I'm inlove with you.

The song ends. And on the last note, RORSCHACH emits an ungodly HOWL OF FURY, diving over the metal railing, PLUNGING to the street below.

159. EXT. STREET BELOW - A MOMENT LATER - NIGHT

Four stories down a FAT COP is holding a megaphone and scanning the rooftops. He sees RORSCHACH plummeting towards him but is too fat to dodge out of the way. RORSCHACH lands right on top of him, flattening him to the sidewalk. The CTU COPS leap on RORSCHACH instantly, kicking him and pummelling him with billy clubs and rifle butts.

COPS
GET HIM! GET HIS MASK! LET'S SEE THE
FUCKER'S FACE!!

RORSCHACH
GNAAAAHH!! NO!! NO!!

In seconds the inkblot mask is off - revealing a pocked, doughy face topped off by a shock of MATTED RED HAIR. It's a familiar face... the face of the STREET CRAZY who haunts the news stand with his placard announcing the end of the world.

COP
Christ. He's got five-inch heels. The fuckin' runt wears elevator shoes!

RORSCHACH
NO!! NO!! GIVE IT BACK!!

He kicks and claws at the COPS as they drag him unceremoniously off to a nearby van.

COP II
So that's the terror of the underworld.
That ugly little zero.

RORSCHACH
GIVE ME BACK MY FACE!!!

The van doors slam shut on RORSCHACH - just as the first FIRE TRUCKS arrive to turn their hoses on the flaming skeleton of the tenement.

CUT TO:

160. INT. DREIBERG'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

DREIBERG and LAURIE stretched out on the sofa, under a blanket. He stares up at the ceiling, still troubled.

DREIBERG
I'm sorry, Laurie. I... It's... I can't relax... It's this whole mask killer thing... Ever since the Comedian... and Adrian being shot at... I'm just a bundle of nerves.

LAURIE
It's all right, Dan. I just want you to hold me, okay? Just hold me.

For a few moments she lies nestled peacefully against his chest. His gaze drifts over to the TV. Suddenly he blanches.

LAURIE (CONTD)
Daniel. What...

On the screen is a huge bluescreen closeup of RORSCHACH. DREIBERG reaches for the remote control and turns up the volume.

TV ANCHOR

... A ten year manhunt ended tonight with the capture of the masked vigilante known as Rorschach. Eight CTU men died in the violent confrontation at a downtown tenement...

The news report CUTS LIVE to the smoking wreckage of the tenement.

LAURIE

Eight cops?... Jesus!... A jury's gonna love that.

DREIBERG

Are you kidding? If they put him in jail he's dead. He'll never get to trial.

Now the screen shows side-by-side closeups of the inkblot mask and the acne-scarred face beneath it. LAURIE looks on, transfixed.

TV ANCHOR

... identified as Walter Joseph Kovacs, 44, a transient with a history of psychological disorders. A former landlord described Kovacs as a self confessed loner and political extremist.

LANDLORD (ON TV)

All kina weirdo literature, paraphernalia... you shoulda seen that place when I threw him out. Talk about pigpens.

LAURIE hits the mute button, settles back and lets out a low whistle. DREIBERG, distracted, pours a glass of wine and gets up to pace the room.

LAURIE

I just realized. I'd never seen his face.
(beat)

I guess it was just a matter of time. He's totally... Daniel? What's wrong?

DREIBERG

The Comedian... Jon... Adrian... Now Rorschach.

He stares at her, obviously wondering: who's next?

CUT TO:

161. EXT. STREET - NEWS KIOSK - DAY

The familiar NEWS VENDOR peddling papers. The BLACK KID is sitting on the pavement nearby reading a comic book with the title, "COLONEL NORTH AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS." A Gazette news poster fixed to the kiosk reads: NIXON PROMISES MAXIMUM FORCE. The NEWS VENDOR nudges the BLACK KID.

NEWS VENDOR

Hey, this ain't a lending library. You pay me for that.

BLACK KID

No way. This one sucks.

A CUSTOMER - 50, black, on the tubby side - stops at the newsstand. His name is DR. LONG.

DR. LONG

Gazette, please.

The NEWS VENDOR hands over a copy of the Gazette. The cover carries side-by-side photos of RORSCHACH and his alter ego, KOVACS, with the banner headline: "CTU APPREHENDS MASKED KILLER."

NEWS VENDOR

D'you see this? This guy's a customer of mine!

(shaking his head)

I mean, I always knew he was a little flaky, but - wild, huh? You never know.

LONG hands over a quarter and unfolds the paper.

NEWS VENDOR

Here, don't forget your nuclear alert procedure supplement.

He hands a magazine to DR. LONG who takes it and wanders off down the street reading the article on Rorschach.

CUT TO:

162. INT. PRISON INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

A bare windowless chamber 10' by 10'. DR LONG and RORSCHACH sit in folding chairs on opposite sides of a square table. On the table is a stack of cards.

DR. LONG

Now, Walter, you obviously know what these are. I want you to look at them and tell me what they remind you of. All right?

RORSCHACH's face is bruised, bloodied and blank. DR. LONG turns up the first card, a symmetrical inkblot - part of a RORSCHACH test. RORSCHACH stares at it.

CUT TO:

163. INT. (FLASHBACK) TENEMENT - DAY

CLOSE UP on terrified EIGHT YEAR OLD BOY. He is holding his arms up in a vain attempt to ward off blows from a SAVAGE LOOKING MAN. The MAN is unshaven, in his underwear and drunk. He is shouting at the BOY and punching him viciously.

CUT TO:

164. INT. PRISON INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

RORSCHACH
 (putting down the card)
 A butterfly.

DR. LONG nods, makes a note on a pad and turns over the next card.
 RORSCHACH stares at it intently.

CUT TO:

165. INT. (FLASHBACK) TENEMENT - DAY

CLOSE UP on the same EIGHT YEAR OLD BOY as he dodges the blows of a WOMAN who is screaming at him. She is dressed in her underwear, her hair is dishevelled and she has a cigarette in her hand. She picks up a kitchen chair and throws it at the BOY.

CUT TO:

166. INT. PRISON INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

RORSCHACH
 (putting down the card)
 Pretty flowers.

LONG nods again, makes another note and turns over another card.
 RORSCHACH looks at it and smiles.

RORSCHACH (CONTD)
 A doggy. A big old floppy-eared dog.

CUT TO:

167. INT. (FLASHBACK)

CLOSE UP of a DOG's head. But this is no sentimental moment. We see a dead GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG with a CLEAVER buried in its skull. The area around the DOG is covered with blood.

CUT TO:

168. INT. PRISON INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

RORSCHACH, still smiling, puts down the card.

DR. LONG
 Good. Very good. I think I... er, we can
 make progress.

RORSCHACH
 (standing up)
 Why you spend so much time on me?

LONG, terried, surreptitiously presses the bell for the guard.

DR. LONG

Uh... Well, because I care about you
and I want to make you well.

RORSCHACH

Other people in cells, behaviour more
extreme. You don't spend time with them.
But then, they're not famous. Won't get
you in the journals.

A couple of GUARDS enter and begin to take RORSCHACH out.

RORSCHACH (CONTD)

You don't want to make me well. Just want
to know what makes me sick. You'll find out...
You'll find out.

RORSCHACH is removed. DR LONG, unsettled, pops a couple of pills.

CUT TO:

169. INT. PRISON MESS HALL - NIGHT

CONVICTS lined up with metal trays at a long cafeteria-style serving area.
RORSCHACH enters in prison greys. As he makes his way towards the dinner
line, we PICK UP a chorus from nearby tables:

VOICE

Hey Rorschach. You dead, man. Just a matter
of time now...

VOICE II

Rorschach. Better put some meat on that pretty
little ass of yours...

Low, threatening CHUCKLES all around as an expressionless RORSCHACH picks
up his tray. A TRIO OF GOONS falls in behind him. The smallest of them
outweighs him by a good forty pounds.

GOON 1.

Hey, Rorschach... You're pretty famous, right?

GOON 2.

Get his autograph.

RORSCHACH's face shows no emotion. He moves forward in the line.
A SERVER drops a gristly chunk of meat on his tin plate.

GOON 3.

Yeh. I got my autograph book right here...

GOON 3. reaches into his pocket and withdraws an ICEPICK.

GOON 3. (CONTD)

Notched up quite a few famous names over
the years.

Suddenly RORSCHACH spins, catching GOON 3's head with the edge of his dinner tray. The icepick clatters to the floor. GOON 3. follows.

The others are on him in an instant, PINNING HIM against the serving counter. Instead of resisting, RORSCHACH vaults backwards. He brings a KNEE up into GOON 2's chin, grabs a fistful of GOON 1's hair, and tumbles back OVER THE COUNTER - dragging GOON 1's head, face down, into a steaming tray full of bubbling SOUP.

Landing on-his feet, keeping his grip on GOON 1's hair, RORSCHACH uses his free hand to bury a FORK in a CAFETERIA WORKER's gut. GOON 2. lunges at him across the counter. He grabs a VAT off a nearby burner and, with a single sweep of the arm, DOUSES both GOONS with HOT COOKING FAT.

All this has taken five seconds maximum. WHISTLES shriek as the two disfigured GOONS writhe on the floor in hideous agony, faces cracked and smoking. CAFETERIA WORKERS clear a path as PRISON GUARDS rush in with billy clubs drawn.

As the GUARDS haul him off, RORSCHACH emits a ferocious HISS. It sounds uncannily like the sizzle of boiling oil on human flesh.

CUT TO:

170. INT. PRISON INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

LONG and RORSCHACH have changed rooms. The new room - two chairs, a square table - is identical to the first, except for the REINFORCED WIRE MESH which spans its width, separating doctor from patient.

Through a narrow opening in the wire DR LONG slides a card across the table for RORSCHACH's inspection. RORSCHACH takes the card and looks at it.

RORSCHACH

A whore fucking.

DR. LONG

Do you know her?

RORSCHACH

She's my mother. You know that.

LONG passes RORSCHACH another card. RORSCHACH stares at it.

RORSCHACH (CONTD)

Doggy. Big old floppy-eared dog...

(pause; then smiling)

... with his skull split in half.

DR. LONG

Mnn. And what do you think split the dog's skull in half?

RORSCHACH

I did.

(beat)

He was a bad dog.

DR. LONG shifts in his seat.

DR. LONG

Walter. This compulsion of yours... to punish transgressors. In your mind... what gives you the right to judge?

RORSCHACH

I'm compelled.

DR. LONG.

Yes, but by what?...

(no response)

I mean... for instance... Why would you be compelled to kill a dog?

RORSCHACH

One night... opened my eyes, saw the world.

171. EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - DUSK (FLASHBACK)

NIGHT FALLS on ruined buildings with broken windows and crumbling walls. The streets are empty, silent except for the distant sound of dogs BARKING. RORSCHACH'S NARRATION continues OVER SCENE:

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

'75. kidnap case, little Franco girl. Weeks dragged by... no word. Thought of little child, alone, frightened... Didn't like it. Personal reasons.

The lone figure of RORSCHACH emerges from the shadows and turns up his collar. He strides deliberately down the sidewalk past a ramshackle wooden storm fence covered with obscene graffiti.

RORSCHACH (V.O. CONTD)

Got a tip. Abandoned dress factory in Brooklyn.

He peers through a broken slat in the fence. In a side yard TWO HUGE GERMAN SHEPHERDS growl playfully, fighting over some unseen object.

172. INT. DRESS FACTORY -DUSK (FLASHBACK)

A DOOR swings open and RORSCHACH enters. He pockets a metal file, flicks on a flashlight.

Mannequins, decrepit sewing machines, rolls of rotting fabric. The light shines on a small, dank cot in the corner. RORSCHACH wanders over. He finds opened tins of food, an overturned water glass, and, on the floor, a ROPE.

There's a pot-bellied stove nearby. RORSCHACH crouches beside it, sticks a hand inside, and sifts through the ashes; he pulls out a charred scrap of FABRIC from a child's pajamas, decorated with balloons and teddy bears.

He stands. In the opposite corner of the room is a big wooden CHOPPING BLOCK. RORSCHACH wanders over and examines the surrounding paraphernalia: a cleaver, a bone saw, an assortment of butcher's knives. He stands there a moment, then moves to a wire-mesh WINDOW.

RORSCHACH (V.O. CONTD)

Dogs wouldn't shut up. That's when I knew where the little girl had gone.

173. RORSCHACH'S POV - THE YARD OUTSIDE - DUSK (FLASHBACK)

The German Shepherds romp in the dying light. We CLOSE IN ON the dogs until we see what it is they're tussling over: a BIG BLOODY KNOB OF BONE.

RORSCHACH (V.O. CONTD)

Decided to wait for the owner...

174. INT. FACTORY - ENTRY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Keys in the lock. A moment later, the door swings wide; a FAT MAN enters and whistles to the dogs.

FAT MAN

Fred? Barney? Dinnerti...

RORSCHACH steps out of the shadows and BASHES HIM OVER THE HEAD.

175. INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

RORSCHACH, master of suspense, decides to take a break in the story. He leans back in his chair. Finally, DR. LONG, dreading the answer, asks:

DR. LONG

Then what happened?

RORSCHACH

... Made a little trip to the butcher store. Locked up tight. Had to break in.

176. INT. FACTORY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The FAT MAN squirms on the floor, a gag in his mouth. He's handcuffed to an exposed pipe. RORSCHACH strides into frame with a GROCERY SACK.

He kneels beside the FAT MAN and loosens his gag. Then he peels off his glove and reaches into the sack.

FAT MAN

What... what are you d...?

RORSCHACH silences the FAT MAN by cramming a fistful of RAW HAMBURGER into his open mouth. He's got several pounds of the stuff, and he spends the next few seconds SMEARING IT all over the FAT MAN's face, throat and hands. Stuffing the leftovers down his shirt.

When he's done, he reaches into the sack for a big plastic bag full of STEER BLOOD... and EMPTIES IT over the FAT MAN'S head.

FRANTIC SCRATCHING from outside. RORSCHACH strolls over to the door, and - as the FAT MAN wriggles in helpless terror - lets the dogs inside.

He then stands back and enjoys the carnage.

177. INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

DR. LONG looks on goggle-eyed as RORSCHACH cheerfully wraps things up.

RORSCHACH

When they finished eating, picked up a cleaver... split their skulls. Died happy. Full bellies.

(leaning forward)

See, God didn't kill the little girl. Or the man who killed her... or the dogs, or me.

If God saw what any of us did, he didn't seem to mind.

DR. LONG

That man, then, he was the first. The first you...

RORSCHACH

Saw the world that night... random, empty, hideous. God didn't make it that way. We did. We make the world - in our own image. After that... was Rorschach.

LONG's had enough. He reaches for the concealed buzzer and the prison GUARDS file in. RORSCHACH gets up. Before he turns to go, he points a finger at LONG's inkblot.

RORSCHACH (CONTD)

Maybe not a dog. Maybe... just a man's face.

The GUARDS pull RORSCHACH out. DR. LONG, still queasy, empties a couple of pills from a bottle and gulps then down dry. After a second he reaches for his briefcase. As he's gathering his cards, he stops suddenly - his gaze riveted to the random, symmetrical pattern on the top of the stack. It seems to shift before his eyes.

LONG blinks, swallows hard. We MOVE IN tighter and tighter on the RORSCHACH blot as it turns into the shape of a MAN SITTING IN A PRISON CELL.

MIX TO:

178. INT. CELL - MAXIMUM SECURITY WING - NIGHT

RORSCHACH is sitting in his 10' by 15' cell staring impassively at the wall. The cell contains a bunk bed, which serves as a seat, and a lavatory bowl. A heavy, barred, door looks out onto an empty corridor. SUDDENLY, THREE PRISONERS step out in front of the barred door. Two of these, MICHAEL and FAT LAWRENCE, are huge, while the third, BIG FIGURE, is tiny.

BIG FIGURE
Rorschach. It's been a long time.

RORSCHACH, unperturbed, continues to stare at the wall.

RORSCHACH
Big Figure. Small world.

BIG FIGURE
(laughs. unwraps cigar)
"Small world"... I like that. Very good... But y'know you're right. This is a small world. I've been in it for... How long is it, Michael?

MICHAEL
Twenty years, Mr Figure.

BIG FIGURE
Twenty years... It's a long time. I bet you forgot what you did to me. You and that owl guy.

FAT LAWRENCE proffers BIG FIGURE a light for his cigar.

BIG FIGURE (CONTD)
(accepting light)
Thank you, Lawrence. Funny ain't it? Now you're locked up in here with us.

RORSCHACH
Wrong... You're locked up here with me.

BIG FIGURE falters for a moment then covers with a laugh.

BIG FIGURE
I like it... Oh, by the way, those guys you burned are dying: Maybe tomorrow, maybe Thursday, Friday... But don't worry, it'll never reach court. You neither. When they croak, this place blows, and then you die by inches.

RORSCHACH
Tall order.

MICHAEL flies into a rage and rattles the bars of the cell.

MICHAEL
Lemme get in there! I wanna tear this guy a new hole!

BIG FIGURE
Easy, Michael. I've waited twenty years. There's no hurry. He'll get his soon enough.

BIG FIGURE, followed by the others, turns and begins to move away.

BIG FIGURE

You're alone in the valley of the shadow,
Rorschach, where your past has a long reach,
and between you and it there's one crummy
lock... Think about it.

RORSCHACH remains, sitting, coolly staring at the wall.

CUT TO:

179. INT. DREIBERG'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - EVENING.

DREIBERG is improving the security of the apartment. He finishes fixing metal brackets to the wall on either side of the front door. He then slides a steel bar, horizontally, behind the brackets and across the door. He tests its strength and then stands back to admire it.

LAURIE (O.V.)

Oh no! Dan! Dan!

DREIBERG imagines the worst. He snatches up a screwdriver and charges into the living room.

180. INT. DREIBERG'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING.

DREIBERG comes hurtling through the door to find LAURIE kneeling in front of the TV watching the screen in horror.

DREIBERG

Laurie...!

LAURIE

It's the peace rally! The CTU's dropping
tear gas!

181. INSERT - TELEVISION SCREEN

A massive PEACE RALLY downtown. Thousands of CITIZENS have turned out. PLACARDS and PROTEST SIGNS are everywhere. At the front of the demonstration fighting has broken out between RIOT COPS and DEMONSTRATORS. The COPS are swinging batons and rifle butts. A trio of HOVERCRAFT with CTU on their undersides, hover above the DEMONSTRATORS dropping tear-gas canisters which explode in the crowd. Hysterical DEMONSTRATORS panic and collide with each other in their attempts to escape. A couple of COPS go down in the melee. RIOTERS grab their rifles, turn them on the CTU ships overhead. CANNONS on the bellies of the CTU HOVERCRAFT swivel and begin spitting automatic fire at the mob below.

Near the front of the picture is the NEWSVENDOR, desperately trying to close up his kiosk and protect his stock. The BLACK KID is helping him.

An unintelligible, almost inaudible, frenetic commentary runs sporadically throughout the above.

182. INT. DREIBERG'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Laurie
(appalled)
They're going to kill hundreds of
people!!!

Dreiberg
(incensed)
God almighty!

The picture on screen CUTS TO an ANNOUNCER.

ANNOUNCER
Channel 4 Newsroom. News just in...

183. INSERT - TELEVISION SCREEN

ANNOUNCER
... An official source from the Pentagon
has confirmed reports that Soviet tanks
are crossing the border into Afghanistan.
There are no more details at present but
we'll be back with you just as soon as we
get that information. And now back to Philip
Moynahan at the Peace Rally.

The screen reverts to scenes of mayhem. A shaky CAMERA catches a RIOT COP
in the act of kicking an old man with white hair who has fallen to the
ground. The COP sees the CAMERA and rushes towards it swinging his baton.

Laurie (C.V.)
This is horrible!!!

184. INT. DREIBERG'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Violent scenes from the Peace Rally continue to roll in. LAURIE begins
to sob.

Dreiberg
(worked up)
Okay, that's it! Fuck the mask killer!
I'm going out there!

He storms from the room.

Laurie
Dan?... Dan?

185. INT. DREIBERG'S KITCHEN - EVENING

DREIBERG rushes into the kitchen, stripping off clothes along the way.
He quickly unlocks the steel door to the basement. LAURIE enters.

LAURIE
I'm coming with you.

DREIBERG
(hurrying through the door)
No. It's too risky.

He turns and kisses her.

DREIBERG (CONTD)
We need one of us left to write the official
history!

He shoots down the stairs.

186. DREIBERG'S BASEMENT/GARAGE - EVENING

DREIBERG rockets down the steps and into the basement. En route, he first removes his clothes, and then proceeds to put on his Owl outfit, pieces of which are hanging at strategic intervals along his path to the OWLSHIP. Theoretically, this enables him to dress for action in a highly efficient time-and-motion fashion. In fact, he's put on ten pounds since he last wore the costume, and the procedure does not go as smoothly as intended. However, by the time he reaches the OWLSHIP, he's more-or-less dressed as NIGHTOWL.

He drags the tarpaulin off the OWLSHIP, creating a cloud of dust as he does so. He then clears the ship's path of oil-drums, tool-boxes, etc. before opening the hatch and climbing aboard.

187. INT. OWLSHIP IN GARAGE - EVENING

DREIBERG climbs into the Owlship, closing the hatch behind him. He sits at the controls and quickly runs through the systems. Lights flash on in the control panels, TV screens light up, and the engine fires into life and begins to hum. He throws more switches. Sprays of water spurt across the "eyes" of the Owlship and screen-wipers move back and forth, cleaning away dust and grime. Powerful head-lights flash on, illuminating the tunnel leading from the garage. DREIBERG applies more juice and the engine roars. He looks out through an observation eye just in time to see LAURIE arrive in front of the ship. He's stunned. She's wearing her SILK SPECTRE outfit and looks amazing, incredibly beautiful, extremely sexy. DREIBERG, awe-struck, sits gazing at her. LAURIE tries to shout above the noise of the engine. She waves her arms indicating that she'd like DREIBERG to wake up and let her in. After a couple of moments, he recovers his senses and opens the hatch. LAURIE enters.

DREIBERG
I... I didn't realize you...

LAURIE
Yeh - I hate this outfit. But I always carry
it - like a curse.

DREIBERG
(stupified)
You... you're...

LAURIE
I know. Silk Spectre - "Bimbo Extraordinary."
Come on - let's go!

DREIBERG pulls himself together and jumps behind the controls. LAURIE occupies the co-pilot's seat. DREIBERG gives LAURIE a last, amazed, look as he opens the throttle, releases the brakes, and steers the Owlship forward, at speed, into the mouth of the tunnel.

188. EXT. OUTSIDE MOUTH OF TUNNEL - EVENING

Heavy warehouse doors slide back to reveal the Owlship rushing towards us from within the tunnel. The doors open completely, just in time to enable the speeding craft to zoom out between them.

189. INT. OWLSHIP - A MOMENT LATER

DREIBERG
Hey, the doors still work. That's a
good sign.

LAURIE looks questioningly at DREIBERG. He smiles. She realizes he's teasing her and narrows her eyes at him.

DREIBERG (CONTD)
(beginning to enjoy this)
Let's arrange some cloud cover.

He hits a button.

190. EXT. DERELICT TENEMENT - A MOMENT LATER

The Owlship skims across the roof of a derelict tenement, pumping out white smoke fore and aft.

191. EXT. DOWNTOWN - PEACE RALLY - THAT MOMENT

The CROWD are still panicking as tear-gas canisters continue to explode among them. A CTU HOVERCRAFT descends closer to the ground.

LOUDSPEAKER
CEASE AND DESIST AT ONCE! DISPERSE
IMMEDIATELY! WE WILL NOT HESITATE
TO USE FORCE!

The gun on the underside of the CTU ship spits fire again.

192. INT. OWLSHIP - A MOMENT LATER.

LAURIE is watching the proceedings at the rally on screen in the cabin.

LAURIE

(outraged)

They're just mowing them down!

(pause)

This is it! The end of the world!

This is what it looks like!

DREIBERG too looks at the screen

DREIBERG

(horrified)

Shit!

THE CAMERA moves in close on DREIBERG's stricken face as we

CUT TO:

193. FLASHBACK - PROCESSED FOOTAGE

We're back in slo-mo sepia land, the Golden Age of Superheroes. THE OWLSHIP emerges from a fogbank and rises majestically into frame, like the Seventh Cavalry arriving to save the day. As it draws closer, the perspex canopy coming into view, we can just make out NIGHT OWL at the helm, with SILK SPECTRE riding shotgun.

There's a FRENZIED MOB below, racing right and left, their aimless motions stylized and surreal. They're beset by a sudden WINDSTORM as the Owlship's powerful BLOWERS clear the TEAR GAS from the fantasy equivalent of the downtown area. Faces turn upwards, fingers point...

... and suddenly, the footage we're watching undergoes a SUBTLE TRANSFORMATION. COLORS bleed in; SOUND comes up; the pace of the action QUICKENS. And when we cut back to the ship overhead, we're in full-color and real time...

194. AERIAL SHOT - ON OWLSHIP

... because the Owlship is really there... and by God, the Watchmen are back in action a quarter-mile above the Peace Rally.

195. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT

The three CTU SHIPS are now visible through the cockpit eye.

DREIBERG

(a bit apprehensive)

Okay, Silk Spectre... let's see if we've still got what it takes.

On the panel, a COMPUTER TARGETING DEVICE homes in on a CTU SHIP.

196. INT. CTU HOVERCRAFT - THAT MOMENT

A RADAR MAN stares at his console in puzzlement.

CTU RADAR MAN

Sir, we've got an odd blip off starboard...

The CTU ship COMMANDER should be strangely familiar, on account of his Tyrolean hat with its red feather (or somesuch device). Older but no wiser.

COMMANDER

Wha...SHIT!!!

The ship ROCKS VIOLENTLY as a sudden EXPLOSION...

197. AERIAL SHOT - ON CTU HOVERCRAFT

... BLOWS THE CANNON MOUNT CLEANLY OFF ITS UNDERSIDE!! The ruptured ship wobbles.

197a. INT. CTU HOVERCRAFT - THAT MOMENT

The COMMANDER is wrestling with the controls in an attempt to steady the ship.

COMMANDER

(apoplectic)

IT'S THE FUCKING WATCHMEN!!! I don't believe it!!!
I just don't believe it!!!!... Well, the bastards ain't
screwing my promotion this time!!!

197b. AERIAL SHOT - ON CRIPPLED CTU HOVERCRAFT.

The ship, jets spluttering, lurches towards the harbor and SLAPS DOWN HARD against the water.

198. ANGLE ON CROWD

pointing at the skies in disbelief. The NEWS VENDOR and BLACK KID amongst them.

BLACK KID

LOOK! UP THERE!

NEWSVENDOR

Oh my God, it's...

199. INT. OWLSHIP - ON DREIBERG

He barks into a microphone:

DREIBERG

Attention CTU! Cease fire immediately --

200. EXT. DOWNTOWN - THAT MOMENT - EVENING

Ground level. From the midst of the bewildered CROWD we watch as the OWLSHIP and the CTU talk some serious trash:

OWLSHIP LOUDSPEAKER
-- or we'll BLOW YOUR ASSES OUT OF THE SKY!

CTU LOUDSPEAKER
UNREGISTERED CRAFT. IDENTIFY YOURSELF

OWLSHIP LOUDSPEAKER
BABY... WE'RE A BLAST FROM THE PAST.

The CROWD's in a frenzy. Most of them are taking it on the lam. But a dozen hardy souls are standing stock-still, transfixed by a strange sight overhead.

NEWSVENDOR
...IT'S THE WATCHMEN!!!

EXITEMENT RIPPLES through the CROWD as the CTU SHIPS bob in the air, clumsily turning to face their attacker. Soon the ships are hanging immobile in midair, squaring off face-to-face, a Wild West showdown. On the prows of all three craft, MISSILE LAUNCHERS rotate into position.

201. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT

DREIBERG with his hand poised on the throttle.

DREIBERG

(concentrating hard)

Uh oh. Hold tight. Looks like they're keen to give us some practice.

An instant before the CTU rockets FIRE, DREIBERG shoves the throttle FULL-FORWARD.

202. AERIAL SHOT - ON OWLSHIP

With a burst of flame, the Owlship BLASTS OFF. The TWO ROCKETS CONVERGE on the point where the OWLSHIP was hovering a millisecond before - and COLLIDE. BOOM. The OWLSHIP, meanwhile, HURTLES FORWARD - slicing DIRECTLY BETWEEN the two CTU SHIPS. The CROWD CHEERS.

203. INT. OWLSHIP - A MOMENT LATER - NIGHT

DREIBERG rides the JOYSTICK . LAURIE watches a monitor showing the aft view from the ship.

DREIBERG

(amazed at his success)

Hey! How about that? That wasn't so bad, was it?

LAURIE

They're following us.

DREIBERG

I think it's you they're attracted to.

MACHINE-GUN FIRE peppers the rear of the ship. DREIBERG arcs hard left and DROPS, taking evasive action.

204. EXT. WORLD TRADE CENTER - NIGHT

The OWLSHIP streaks between the twin towers. A second later, the CTU SHIPS rip past on either side.

204. EXT. STREET - NIGHT

ASTONISHED PEDESTRIANS GAPE at the bizarre DOGFIGHT above them. The OWLSHIP doglegs around a darkened office building. A CTU MISSILE blows a hole in its facade.

205. AERIAL SHOT - ON OWLSHIP

firing TWO MISSILES aftward at the pursuing craft.

206. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT

DREIBERG exhilarated. LAURIE, worried, checking the radar readout:

LAURIE

Missed 'em Dan. You're aiming high!

DREIBERG

I don't want to take 'em out. Just... keep 'em interested.

LAURIE

(checking the monitor)
They're practically on us...

DREIBERG

That Detroit shit? I'm so worried.

He punches a button on the dash. It's labelled "TURBO."

207. AERIAL SHOT - ON AIRSHIP

The turbojets kick in and the Owlship ACCELERATES to 400 mph, leaving the CTU craft in the dust.

208. EXT. HOLLAND TUNNEL - NIGHT

A line of TRAFFIC enters the tunnel. The Owlship SWOOPS suddenly, and -- just clearing the arch -- ENTERS ABOVE THEM.

A moment later, the lead CTU SHIP tries to follow. Bad move. The less-maneuverable craft rams into the LIP of the arch -- and EXPLODES.

The SECOND CTU SHIP hurtles towards a similar fate. But at the last moment retro-jets blasting at full force - it manages to STOP ITSELF. It backs up slightly, edges up OVER the tunnel, and settles for the airborne route.

209. INT. HOLLAND TUNNEL - A MOMENT LATER

The OWLSHIP zooms through the tunnel, mere feet above the tops of the cars. HORNS HONK. BRAKES SCREECH.

There's an oversized TRUCK directly in its path. The OWLSHIP nudges UP slightly - and clears the truck by INCHES, throwing off SPARKS against the roof of the tunnel.

210. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT

The end of the tunnel is coming up fast.

DREIBERG
(concentrating hard)
Fog blowers on. Activate radar sheilds.

211. EXT. HOLLAND TUNNEL - OPPOSITE END - NIGHT

The OWLSHIP emerges from the tunnel and noses UPWARD at an almost vertical angle, spewing DENSE CLOUDS OF BILLOWING FOG in its wake. A few seconds later, the lone remaining CTU ship arrives - but, seeing only FOG and no trace of the OWLSHIP, it pushes forward on a horizontal course and disappears into the darkness beyond the water.

212. INT. OWLSHIP - A MOMENT LATER - NIGHT

They're in the middle of a cloudbank. DREIBERG is wearing a look of intense satisfaction as LAURIE nervously checks the radar.

LAURIE

We lost him.

He flashes her a smug little smile. LAUGHING UNCONTROLLABLY, she shakes her head and buries her face in her hands.

LAURIE (CONTD)

Oh, Daniel... are we in deep shit!

FADE THROUGH TO:

213. INT. MAXIMUM SECURITY BLOCK - NIGHT

Smoke and confusion everywhere; ESCAPED CONVICTS racing to and fro past sprawling, unconscious GUARDS. In the midst of all the chaos. THREE MENACING FIGURES stride purposefully through the cellblock. It's the psychotic midget, BIG FIGURE, the irascible MICHAEL and FAT LAWRENCE. The latter is pushing an oversized electric arc welder. The overhead lights keep flashing on and off.

MICHAEL

RORSCHACH! WE'RE COMIN' FOR YUH!

CUT TO:

214. EXT. AERIAL SHOT - ON OWLSHIP - NIGHT

Drifting lazily through a cloudbank. The blunt prow of the Owlship emerges gradually from a shroud of fog and catches a shaft of pale blue moonlight.

215. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

Through the cockpit window the distant city skyline glimmers, then disappear again behind wisps of cloud. We're taking a dreamy tour of the stratosphere slow and elegant. Somewhere, Billy Holliday is singing "You're My Thrill."

Instruments blink and beep on the panel. No one's at the controls.

The ship lurches. A wine bottle tips and rolls noisily across the width of the cabin floor. A woman's hand reaches for it and sets it right. It's LAURIE, who's midway through a two-minute kiss with DREIBERG. The pair of them are locked in a tight, post-coital embrace on the cabin floor, their clothing in heaps around them.

LAURIE

(playfully)

Didn't we flunk out on this one time before?... How come we just shot to the top of the class?

DREIBERG starts to say something but settles back with a serene smile instead.

LAURIE (CONTD)

I bet I know why?

DREIBERG

What?... Why?

LAURIE

(smirking)

The costumes... Am I right?

DREIBERG seems mildly shocked by the proposition. Then, despite himself, he starts to laugh.

LAURIE (CONTD)

Come on. Admit it.

DREIBERG

No way. I'm not that much of a pervert.

LAURIE

Yes you are.

DREIBERG

Okay, I am... Tonight was the first time I've felt like myself in ten years.

LAURIE

(serious)

That's because there's nothing to be afraid of anymore. The world's about to end.

DREIBERG

Yeh... and now I feel like I could save it.

He grabs his cloak, wraps it around him, and moves purposefully to the instrument panel. He throws a few switches, arcs the Owlship hard right.

LAURIE

What are you doing?

DREIBERG

While we're on the subject of perverts --
Rorschach. We can't let him die in jail --
Let's spring him.

LAURIE

... What?!

DREIBERG, rejuvenated, exhilarated, reaches for the throttle and kicks the ship into overdrive.

216. EXT. AERIAL SHOT - NIGHT

AFTERBURNERS belch flame as the Owlship accelerates, ripping through the clouds above the city.

CUT TO:

217. SERIES OF SHOTS - THE PRISON

SIRENS HOWL as we get several quick glimpses of gleeful CONVICTS running wild: disabling GUARDS, overrunning cell blocks, liberating weapons, throwing food.

218. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT

DREIBERG and LAURIE, back in full costume. DREIBERG's eyes are riveted to a monitor over the controls:

DREIBERG

I think we're just a trifle late.

LAURIE

Jesus, Dan. Out of the frying pan...

The MONITOR shows a magnified view of the PRISON COMPLEX below them. The PRISONERS have taken the quad, and are exchanging fire with the GUARDS in the watch tower. It's an ugly, bloody mess.

DREIBERG

I know he's totally bugfuck, but, well...
we did set out to be a kinda fellowship of
legendary beings and all that shit... and I
owe him a couple.

219. INT. CELL - NIGHT

SIRENS BLARING everywhere. RORSCHACH stands calmly beside his bunk, staring at the wall.

BIG FIGURE, MICHAEL and LAWRENCE arrive at the cell door.

BIG FIGURE

(puffing cigar)

Well, Rorschach, here it is at long last.
Payback time.

LAWRENCE

We're gonna make you a little shorter, pal.

RORSCHACH

Fat chance.

LAWRENCE, enraged, throws himself at the bars and tries to grab RORSCHACH who is, tantalizingly, millimeters out of reach.

LAWRENCE

Fat! You lousy little bastard! I'm gonna
tear your fuckin' heart out!

THE LIGHTS GO OUT. Plunging the cell and corridor into pitch black.

BIG FIGURE

Shit! Somebody's fuckin' with the circuits.

THE LIGHTS COME ON AGAIN.

BIG FIGURE (CONTD)

Okay. Lawrence, get a move on with the
welder. We got delayed breakin' it out -
and I wanna take my time.

LAWRENCE, standing against the bars, doesn't move.

BIG FIGURE (CONTD)

Lawrence! You fuckin' deaf!

BIG FIGURE gives LAWRENCE a push with his foot. LAWRENCE topples over backwards and lies flat on the floor. A SOUP SPOON sticks in the air, its sharpened handle BURIED DEEP IN HIS EYE SOCKET. RORSCHACH appears not to have moved.

MICHAEL

Jesus!

RORSCHACH

One, nothing. Your move.

BIG FIGURE

Son of a bitch! WE'RE GONNA PEEL YOU LIKE
A GRAPE!!!

(to Michael)

Light the torch.

MICHAEL plugs the arc welder flex into a socket. The flex is old and worn and THROWS OUT SPARKS in places along its length. MICHAEL ignites the welder and goes to work on the lock of RORSCHACH's cell.

220. INT. RORSCHACH'S CELL - THAT MOMENT

RORSCHACH is waiting, impassively, beside his bunk. The metal lock of the cell door is beginning to glow a dull red.

CUT TO:

221. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

DREIBERG hands LAURIE what looks like a pair of electronic EARMUFFS.

DREIBERG

I'm turning on the screamers. We'll have to hit the roof running...

He throws a switch on the control panel.

222. EXT. PRISON COMPLEX - A MOMENT LATER - NIGHT

WINDOWS SHATTER in the guard towers as a WAILING ULTRASONIC SCREECH splits the air. On the roof of the complex, PARALYZED GUARDS drop their weapons; ESCAPED PRISONERS clutch at their burst eardrums as the Owlship descends and gently touches down.

CUT TO:

223. INT. RORSCHACH'S CELL - THAT MOMENT

The LOCK is BRIGHT RED and GLOWING. The "Owl screech" can be heard in the distance. RORSCHACH stands, staring at the wall.

MICHAEL

(applying arc torch)

You hear that sort of screamin'... like a siren?

BIG FIGURE

Ignore it. - Just open the door so we can roast our little friend.

RORSCHACH climbs into the bunk and squats there.

MICHAEL

Aw look, he's climbin' up onto his bunk, like a little kid. Anytime now he's gonna cry. I love it when they do that.

THE LOCK DISINTEGRATES and the door swings open.

MICHAEL (CONTD)

Ha! There she goes!... Got you, you runty little bastard!

MICHAEL advances on RORSCHACH with the arc welding torch.

MICHAEL (CONTD)

You're gonna be hamburger... You're gonna
be smoked meat! You stinking lousy... little...

RORSCHACH leans out from his bunk and smashes the toilet bowl with a KARATE KICK. WATER GUSHES OUT across the cell floor, flooding around MICHAEL and the TATTY ARC WELDING CABLE.

SUDDENLY, MICHAEL begins a herky-jerky dance as 20,000 VOLTS COURSE THROUGH HIS BODY. He pitches face down into the water. All the lights in the cellblock dim and die. BIG FIGURE looks on in disbelief and fear.

RORSCHACH

(from his bunk)

Two, nothing. Your move.

BIG FIGURE begins to back away. He turns and runs down the corridor, glancing fearfully over his shoulder as he goes.

RORSCHACH hooks his boot around the arc welder cable and yanks it out of its wall-socket. He then steps off the bunk, over MICHAEL's body, and sets off purposefully after BIG FIGURE.

224. INT. PRISON CORRIDOR - A MOMENT LATER

DREIBERG and LAURIE move down a dark, abandoned corridor, trying to get their bearings.

LAURIE

Let's hope their emergency generators
kick on soon.

DREIBERG

We should be close to solitary.

Their heads turn towards the the end of the passage, where a SECOND CORRIDOR crosses the one they're standing in. As they watch, a MIDGET sprints past and disappears.

DREIBERG and LAURIE blink in disbelief: huh? A moment later, a familiar figure with BRIGHT RED HAIR strides past.

DREIBERG

...Rorschach??

RORSCHACH pauses. He stares at his costumed colleagues for a second and a half - then keeps on walking.

225. INT. PRISON - CROSS CORRIDOR - A MOMENT LATER

The terrified BIG FIGURE realizes he's hit a dead end. He throws a glance over his shoulder, sees RORSCHACH moving up on him. Desperate, he ducks into a MEN'S ROOM.

RORSCHACH follows, his pace measured and deliberate. Behind him LAURIE and DREIBERG have just rounded the corner into the cross corridor.

LAURIE

Hey! Rorschach!

He turns and holds a finger up: one moment please. Then, calm and dispassionate, he enters the MEN'S ROOM. DREIBERG and LAURIE watch this, from the end of the corridor, in disbelief.

LAURIE (CONTD)

What's he doing?

DREIBERG

I think he's going to the john.

LAURIE

(indignant)

My God! We bust him out of jail, in the middle of a riot, and he stops to take a...

DREIBERG

Uh, look it's okay. I mean it happens to everybody, right?... I remember once I was closing on this dope dealer and I needed to take a leak. By the time I'd got in and out of my costume, he'd vanished. I redesigned it since then.

There is a BUMPING SOUND coming from the MEN'S ROOM.

LAURIE

Hell, what's he doing in there?
That bumping...

DREIBERG

I think I just heard him flush.

RORSCHACH steps out of the men's room.

LAURIE

(cross)

At last!

RORSCHACH

There. Did what had to be done.
Can leave now.

LAURIE

Really? I mean, are you sure? We don't want to go diving head first into things!

RORSCHACH

Hurm... Good advice. Know someone who'd agree with you.

CUT TO:

226 and 227 are deleted.

228. EXT. AERIAL SHOT - NIGHT

LOW ANGLE on the Owlship as it descends slowly through the clouds. On its underbelly, a VIDEO CAMERA grinds and rotates.

229. INT. OWLSHIP - NIGHT

DREIBERG and LAURIE watch a monitor which shows an overhead view of the city. He punches up a series of PROGRESSIVE MAGNIFICATIONS, gradually zeroing in on a single city block. It's been cordoned off; POLICE BUBBLE-CARS are parked up and down its length.

DREIBERG
They've got my building surrounded.

(CONTINUED)

LAURIE

Maybe they were following me all along.

DREIBERG

Coulda been a hundred different thing...
Oh well, so much for Dan Dreiberg, ordinary
citizen.

RORSCHACH

Night Owl, better.

DREIBERG

(ruefully)

Yeh... What now?

RORSCHACH

Head for the waterfront. Need spare face.

230. EXT. WATERFRONT WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

DREIBERG descends the rope ladder from the OWLSHIP, which hovers overhead. RORSCHACH is already crouched beside an exterior wall of the warehouse; he pries off a couple of loose slats and digs around, swatting angrily at a RAT which scampers out of the hole.

A moment later he's holding his "spare face." With a hiss of satisfaction he pulls the blot-mask over his head. When he turns, he sees DREIBERG staring slackjawed at a most unusual sight.

Above their heads, the OWLSHIP has begun to glow - BRIGHT BLUE.

231. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

LAURIE backs against the control panel as the iridescent clue corona resolves itself into the figure of DR. MANHATTAN.

LAURIE

Jon?! Oh, Jesus, I... They said you
were on Mars...

DR. MANHATTAN

I am on Mars. An hour into the future
we're both on Mars, talking.

LAURIE

What?

DR. MANHATTAN

You're going to try to convince me to
return and save the world.

LAURIE

To save...? I have to convince you?
Jon, this is insane.

DR. MANHATTAN

It will happen, Laurie. I've already seen it.
Neither of us can do anything to change it.

DREIBERG is frantically climbing the ladder. He pokes his head inside the cockpit just in time to see LAURIE reaching out for DR. MANHATTAN's hand.

DREIBERG

LAURIE! DON'T...

Hands touch. A shimmering blue halo surrounds DR. MANHATTAN and LAURIE, and the two of them dissolve.

DREIBERG climbs aboard and heaves a sigh of dismay. RORSCHACH is only a second or two behind him.

RORSCHACH

What happened? Where's Silk Spectre?

DREIBERG

I don't think she's coming with us.

DISSOLVE TO:

232. EXT. MARS - NIGHT

A BLUE SLIT opens in the sky, mere inches above the Martian surface; DR. MANHATTAN steps placidly through, and a moment later LAURIE tumbles out behind him. She takes a couple of halting steps, then GASPS SOUNDLESSLY and PITCHES FORWARD onto the shifting red sands.

DR. MANHATTAN's gone several paces before he realizes there's a problem. He turns to see LAURIE clawing at the air, trying and failing to draw breath.

DR. MANHATTAN

Laurie? What's... Of course. Oxygen.

He steps back and extend his hand. LAURIE grabs it, and is magically surrounded by a HALO OF OXYGEN.

DR. MANHATTAN (CONTD)

I'm sorry. These things slip my mind.

LAURIE

Jesus, Jon... You stupid bastard... I nearly choked to death!...

She starts throwing up.

DR. MANHATTAN

Are you all right?

LAURIE

Of course I'm not alright. I'm throwing up.
I always throw up when you take me anywhere.

DR. MANHATTAN turns and walks away. LAURIE follows him. A moment later, looking up, she stops in her tracks.

Before her is DR. MANHATTAN's new abode. A PALACE OF GLASS, vast and resplendent, towering over the barren sands. At its heart stands a gargantuan ruby-colored HOURGLASS, surrounded by an intricate system of gears and ratchets, spires and pendulums... the guts of a clock.

LAURIE

(overwhelmed)

Oh shit!... I'm on Mars!

DR. MANHATTAN strides placidly forward. LAURIE, boggled, stumbles along after him.

CUT TO:

233. INT. VEIDT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

RORSCHACH and DREIBERG are standing in VEIDT's darkened, deserted, office. The two windows which RORSCHACH broke on previous visits have not yet been repaired.

DREIBERG

Gone. Vanished without trace.

RORSCHACH

Whole building, deserted.

DREIBERG

These broken windows are interesting. What do you think that's about?

RORSCHACH

No idea.

DREIBERG begins to play around with the computer terminal on VEIDT's desk, tapping the keys.

RORSCHACH (CONTD)

(thoughtful)

If we're to find mask killer...

DREIBERG

Rorschach, I think your paranoia's getting in the way here. Maybe there is no mask killer.

RORSCHACH

Even paranoiacs have enemies... Way I see it - Comedian knew about scheme against Manhattan - killed. Moloch knew that - killed. I was getting close - set up. Ozymandias shot at - must know something.

DREIBERG

If he knows something why doesn't he tell us?

RORSCHACH
 Maybe doesn't know he knows.

DREIBERG
 (losing patience)
 Jesus Christ, Rorschach! The world's
 about to blow up and we're fiddling
 around... Hang on! I found his diary.

VEIDT'S DIARY scrolls across the computer screen.

DREIBERG (CONTD.)
 1st November, leave for Antarctica.

RORSCHACH
 His Karnak place, let's go.

RORSCHACH heads for the window. DREIBERG begins to follow but catches himself on.

DREIBERG
 Wait a minute! Antarctica? Do we really
 want to go there?

RORSCHACH looks down out of the window.

RORSCHACH
 Yes, think you'll find we do.

From below we hear the approaching sound of POLICE SIRENS. DREIBERG looks out of the window.

DREIBERG
 Cops. You're right, we do.

DREIBERG and RORSCHACH race for a door.

CUT TO:

234. EXT. ANTARCTICA - NIGHT

The last rays of sunlight bleed across endless frozen plains of pristine white. A private AIRCRAFT descends towards an incongruous strip of black, part of a massive complex of buildings dominated by a huge pyramid. This is Karnak, VEIDT's Antarctic retreat.

235. INT. KARNAK - NIGHT

The entry hall is vast and lavish, appointed in the same Egyptian style as the Veidt Tower. A fur clad figure enters in a flurry of SNOW. FOUR ASIAN STAFF appear to greet him. They have with them BUBASTIS, a genetically altered LYNX, on a leash. The STAFF take VEIDT's parka and serve him hot coffee from a silver tray. VEIDT shakes hands warmly with the STAFF and embraces the LYNX.

HEAD OF STAFF

Welcome, sir. We did not expect you so soon.

VEIDT

It's good to be back. I'll have dinner when I've looked in on the world.

VEIDT takes the LYNX and continues into the building. TWO STAFF fall in behind and follow him to:

236. INT. INFORMATION CENTER - NIGHT

The room is empty but for a single chair, with a complicated REMOTE-CONTROL KEYPAD mounted on the armrest. Across from the chair, RED VELVET CURTAINS hang from ceiling to floor.

VEIDT takes a seat, and his STAFF draw back the curtains to reveal a towering WALL OF TELEVISIONS - 200 monitors in a 10x20 grid, picking up transmissions from all over the world. It's far more information than the human mind could possibly digest at one gulp, a hectic jumble of color and motion. VEIDT loves it. He settles in and his eyes begin to rove.

237. ANGLE ON VIDEO WALL

PANNING across transmissions of every variety - commercials, sitcoms, sportscasts - we settle on a screen labelled "LONDON." VEIDT hits the volume button on his remote, and a NEWSCASTER'S VOICE comes up. On the wall behind her is a civil defense logo...

BBC NEWSCASTER

... best situated in a cellar, as far away from windows as possible. Brick walls are preferred, but a shelter can be constructed from sandbags or from boxes filled with...

FLICK, and the sound dies. VEIDT's gaze drifts several screens to the right. to the monitor labelled "WASHINGTON D.C." Sound up:

NEWSCASTER

... amid rumours that top-ranking officials and military personnel have already been relocated to underground bunkers. White House spokesmen insist that no such precautions have yet been taken and that ongoing negotiations...

FLICK: sound down. Now we shift to a closed-circuit monitor at the bottom right of the bank - an exterior view of VEIDT's Antarctic retreat as seen by a surveillance camera. FLICK: same subject, new angle. FLICK: a RADAR SCREEN, which shows no activity; the skies are clear. FLICK...

... and now things get downright weird. Because all at once we're watching DR. JONATHAN OSTERMAN, the earnest young scientist from twenty-some years ago; he's sitting at a table in the Arizona test lab, with a piece of black velvet spread out before him, calmly and methodically REASSEMBLING A WATCH.

238. REVERSE ANGLE - ON VEIDT

eyeing young Osterman with a strange, grave smile.

CUT TO:

239. EXT. MARS - DR. MANHATTAN'S PALACE - NIGHT

LAURIE and DR. MANHATTAN approach a ruby-crystal stairway which spirals around the exterior of his great glass castle. The enormous gears and ratchets which rim the core of the castle are shifting, meshing - like the movement of a fine Swiss watch.

LAURIE

This whole place is ticking. Does it keep time?

DR. MANHATTAN

Yes. Soon we'll hold our conversation. It commences when you surprise me with the information that you and Dreiberg have been sleeping together.

LAURIE

You... you know about that?

DR. MANHATTAN

No, not yet. But in a few moments you're going to tell me.

LAURIE

Jon... God Almighty!... Jon, you're infuriating! At least with Dan, as a lover...

DR. MANHATTAN

(surprised)

You're sleeping with Dreiberg?

LAURIE

(clutching her head)

I just told you that, didn't I?!

DR. MANHATTAN

That's how time works, Laurie. Everything is preordained... even my responses. We're all puppets. I'm just a puppet who can see the strings. -- Thirty seconds.

LAURIE

(groans)

Jon, what are you trying to do to me?... When you're like this I can't even talk to you, let alone debate the... what was it?

DR. MANHATTAN

Destiny of the world.

Laurie
Destiny of the world.

DR. MANHATTAN
Time is the key. If I can unlock the
origins of time, I'll be able to reconcile
quantum physics and relativity.

He begins to climb the stairs.

DR. MANHATTAN (CONTD)
We'll talk above, on the balcony.

Laurie
(irritated)
Oh yeh?... And what happens if I just stay
down here and screw all your predictions,
huh?... What happens then?

DR. MANHATTAN continues up the stairs and out of sight, leaving Laurie
feeling very alone.

Laurie (CONTD)
Jon?... I said what happens then...?

She follows him up the stairs.

240. EXT. MARS - BALCONY OF DR. MANHATTAN'S PALACE

DR. MANHATTAN is standing on a balcony near the pinnacle of the huge
glass tower. The Martian plains spread out for miles below. Above, the
stars stretch to infinity. A chill, violent wind whips across the balcony.
Laurie reaches the top of the stairs and joins DR. MANHATTAN.

DR. MANHATTAN
I'll be here for the next year or so.
Then I'm going to work my way out towards
the edge of the universe.
(staring out at the landscape)
Utterly uncorrupted by man. Isn't it
beautiful?

Laurie moves to the edge of the balcony and gazes at the bleak and
fissured Martian surface.

Laurie
Okay... According to you Mr. "I tell the
future"... I'm here to try and persuade you
to go back and save the world. Tell me...
Do I succeed?... Or am I wasting my time?

DR. MANHATTAN
I don't know.

Laurie
(mock triumphant)
Ah!

DR. MANHATTAN
I see streets full of corpses.

LAURIE
My God!

DR. MANHATTAN
The details are vague... There's some sort of static obscuring the future... I can't remember... The electromagnetic pulse of a mass warhead detonation might cause that...

LAURIE
(taking a deep breath)
But you're not a hundred per cent sure?

DR. MANHATTAN
No.

LAURIE
So I'm in with a chance?

DR. MANHATTAN
Conceivably.

LAURIE
(frantic)
So what are we waiting for?!!!

DR. MANHATTAN
(coolly)
You have to persuade me.

LAURIE
(angry)
You obtuse, obstructive, son-of-a-bitch!
You snow everybody with your big blue body and your brain and your jargon and... and the truth is... you're just another manipulative bastard!!!... Okay, okay, I know it's preordained. So sorry. I forgot... Jon. This, this "script" you're following... who writes it?

DR. MANHATTAN
I don't know yet. I should be able to tell you in - roughly six hundred years.

LAURIE
Jon! For Christ's sake!... If you can go back to earth and do something - do it! What the fuck am I supposed to say to you?!!!

CUT TO:

241. AERIAL SHOT - ON OWLSHIP - NIGHT

The Owlship is streaking through the icy stratosphere above the South Atlantic. Suddenly it BOUNCES IN MIDAIR - jerks to the right - and begins to spiral downward into the clouds.

242. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

DREIBERG is frantically throwing switches as they lurch to and fro. Finally he manages to get the ship righted. RORSCHACH's taken a bad tumble; he picks himself up off the cabin floor.

RORSCHACH

Something wrong?

DREIBERG

The guidance system's fried. I had to switch to manual... Some kind of massive electromagnetic shockwave.

RORSCHACH

Like a nuclear blast?

DREIBERG throws RORSCHACH an apprehensive look.

CUT TO:

243. EXT. ANTARCTICA - KARNAK - NIGHT

VEIDT'S vast pyramid complex is little more than a dim glow, barely visible through the swirling blizzard.

244. INT. KARNAK - INFORMATION ROOM - THAT MOMENT

VEIDT sits before his VIDEO WALL, sipping mulled wine from a goblet. Almost simultaneously, two screens - labelled "MOSCOW" and "WASHINGTON D.C." - go to SUDDEN BLINDING WHITE.

A second later, the screens show nothing but RANDOM VIDEO NOISE. VEIDT leans back in his chair and cocks an eyebrow, seemingly unperturbed.

245. EXT. ANTARCTICA - NIGHT

The OWLSHIP streaks downward through a total whiteout.

246. INT. OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT

Through the cockpit, KARNAK's visible for an instant. Then it's lost in the snows again.

DREIBERG
I'm taking her down.
(frantically throwing switches)
Radar's blown. I'll have to wing it.
Strap in.

The ship rocks with the force of impact.

247. EXT. ANTARCTICA - ON OWLSHIP - THAT MOMENT

The Owlship takes a hard bounce against the snow. The hull crumples as the craft tips sideways and plows into a deep drift.

A hatch springs open, and DREIBERG and RORSCHACH dig their way out. They're slightly underdressed for the weather. Spotting the lights of Karnak in the distance, they turn up their collars and press on.

248. INT. KARNAK - INFORMATION ROOM - THAT MOMENT

VEIDT's eyeing the closed-circuit security monitor which shows the exterior of the complex. He spots TWO TINY FIGURES slogging through the blizzard.

As he watches, the screens for "LONDON" and "PARIS" go white.

249. EXT. KARNAK - A MOMENT LATER

DREIBERG and RORSCHACH, half-frozen and covered with frost, make it to the great metal entry doors - and start banging. A VIDEO CAMERA mounted over the door rotates into position. A soothing, computerized WOMAN'S VOICE announces:

VOICE
Welcome to Karnak. Please identify yourself.

DREIBERG
Adrian! It's Dreiberg! For God's sake open the doors!

Nothing happens. DREIBERG pounds against the door.

DREIBERG (CONTD)
Adrian! We're freezing to death out here!

He slumps to the ground exhausted, barely able to draw breath. The snow lies in four-foot drifts against the door.

RORSCHACH
He's not coming.

250. INT. KARNAK - INFORMATION ROOM - THAT MOMENT

On the surveillance monitor, RORSCHACH and DREIBERG shamle off.

VEIDT stands, hits his remote. The picture dies -- leaving a mere 199 screens in operation.

The wall is now checkerboarded with monitors showing nothing but VIDEO SNOW. As VEIDT strides calmly out of the room, "PRAGUE" goes white.

CUT TO:

251. EXT. MARS - DR. MANHATTAN'S PALACE - NIGHT

DR. MANHATTAN and LAURIE are still on the balcony.

LAURIE

(in full spate)

... I hate this, Jon!... I hate the responsibility of having to persuade you!... If that's possible!... I hate feeling I'm back in school trying to pass some stupid test to please teacher!... I hate not knowing whether this is all a preordained charade, or... or... My God!... And why can't you work up enthusiasm about life on earth?... You used to be one of us... Or is that the problem? Maybe you were a defective human being in the first place... Ever thought of that? No. Look, you get enthusiastic about the miracle of quantum physics... What about other miracles? Birth, Life, death!... You asshole!!! And you think you've got a monopoly on time!... I know about time!... I'm getting older - which is more than you're doing! I'm regulated by time, the tides, the moon, the planets... I know about these things in a way you never can!... In a way you never did!

(beat)

Shit!

(fumbling in her bag)

Will you extend my aura, please, I need a cigarette.

MANHATTAN

Let's go.

LAURIE

What ?

MANHATTAN

Back to earth. You're right. Life is a miracle. A thermo-dynamic miracle.

LAURIE

(amazed)

But... Is that it?... I only stated the obvious.

MANHATTAN

I know. Sometimes I forget.

CUT TO:

252. EXT. KARNAK - NIGHT

DREIBERG on his knees, half-buried in snow. He topples forward, unable to go on. A PAIR OF GLOVED HANDS enter frame and YANK HIM UP.

DREIBERG

Can't move...

RORSCHACH

Come on. Found an exhaust vent.

RORSCHACH drags the helpless DREIBERG around the side of the complex, where SNOW blows in flurries at the mouth of a TUNNEL-LIKE STRUCTURE.

RORSCHACH (CONTD)

Veidt. Knew it was Veidt... He'll pay for this.

253. INT. KARNAK - DINING HALL - NIGHT

VEIDT alone at a long table in his cavernous dining hall, calmly eating dinner. Behind him, above the mammoth entry doors, hangs a TAPESTRY - Alexander slicing through the Gordian Knot.

TWO BATTERED FIGURES creep silently into the hall.

VEIDT sits at the table betraying nothing. At his side, the MUTANT LYNX growls. VEIDT's hand closes tightly around the scruff of the animal's neck: quiet, girl.

RORSCHACH reaches into his trenchcoat and pulls out a RHODOPSIN FLASHER - the same weapon CAPTAIN METROPOLIS used in the opening scene. Suddenly...

RORSCHACH

VEIDT!

VEIDT whirls. He flings a platter, frisbee-style, across the hall. It catches RORSCHACH on the chin and sends him sprawling. DREIBERG backs against a wall as the LYNX comes sprinting towards him, teeth bared. VEIDT claps his hands twice and the CAT obediently stops. VEIDT gets up and approaches DREIBERG and RORSCHACH.

DREIBERG

Adrian... Did you kill the Comedian?

VEIDT

He was threatening to wreck my work.

DREIBERG

Jesus!... Your "work"?

VEIDT

(smiles)

Come. I'll show you. You can watch me save the world.

254. INT. KARNAK - A MOMENT LATER - NIGHT

VEIDT is walking calmly through the halls of Karnak. The LYNX is beside him. RORSCHACH and DREIBERG are following, a few paces behind. RORSCHACH tries to get close to VEIDT and grab him but is prevented by the LYNX which turns and makes a warning growl. RORSCHACH drops back to rejoin DREIBERG.

VEIDT

... The Comedian suspected the Soviets were up to something - he stumbled on my Pacific research base - but then he figured it was me... He was furious. Naturally, being the "Comedian", he assumed my intention to engineer World War Three was intended as a monumental joke... He couldn't tolerate the idea that I might get the biggest, indeed the last, laugh. I assure you, that's what really annoyed him. I had to get rid of him. The rest of it - Rorschach's capture, my "assassination" - that was just to keep you busy. All that really mattered was getting rid of Dr. Manhattan.

DREIBERG

What??

VEIDT

His absence was essential to the outbreak of war.

RORSCHACH

You started a world war?

VEIDT

I merely hastened the inevitable.

(smiling)

She's been ready to blow for years. I knew all it would take was a little push. So I upset Manhattan by giving a few of his colleagues cancer and pointing the finger at him. Curious how sensitive he can be - for such a cold blue fish.

RORSCHACH

Call off the cat, Veidt, and I'll kill you.

VEIDT

(calmly)

Before you do that you might care to look at the fruit of my labours.

255. INT. - INFORMATION ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

VEIDT points them over to the monitor in the bottom right-hand corner. Onscreen, the young JON OSTERMAN sits in an Arizona test lab, reassembling a WATCH..

DREIBERG

What is this? It looks like Jon.

VEIDT

It is Jon. Twenty-four years ago. Before he turned into Dr. Manhattan.

DREIBERG

Good Lord. How'd you get it on tape?

VEIDT

It's not on tape. It's live. We're watching it happen.

CUT TO:

256. EXT. OUTER SPACE - THAT MOMENT

DR MANHATTAN and LAURIE, in a bubble of oxygen, materialize in orbit around the earth. Far below, the nuclear birds are already reaching their destinations. Flashes of light occur over New York and San Francisco, followed by spreading mushroom clouds.

LAURIE

(terrified)

Those flashes of light!... We're too late!

DR. MANHATTAN

Let's take a look.

CUT TO:

257. EXT. DOWNTOWN - POST BCMB - NIGHT

CLOSE UP on DR. MANHATTAN and LAURIE who appear, in their bubble, surrounded by swirling smoke and dust. LAURIE, travel-sick as usual, begins to retch. As she does so, she glances up and sees something which makes her eyes widen and which causes her to be really sick.

THE CAMERA pulls back to reveal what LAURIE has seen. Acres of burning rubble recede into the distance. Blackened, charred, bodies protrude from piles of bricks, smashed concrete and twisted metal. A shattered CLOCK-TOWER shows the remains of a clock, the hands of which have been welded to the face at midnight, the time of the blast.

In the foreground, freakishly, still standing, and just about recognizable, is what's left of the NEWS KIOSK. A low section of wall remains behind it. Onto this has been burnt the silhouette shadows of the NEWSVENDOR and the BLACK KID.

LAURIE is sobbing hysterically.

DR. MANHATTAN

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have brought you here.

(puzzled)

Strange... There's something... Time's flowing backwards...

LAURIE collapses into DR. MANHATTAN's arms.

LAURIE

Jon... please...

DR. MANHATTAN

... The South Pole.

They dematerialize in the swirling smoke.

MIX TO:

258. INT. KARNAK - LAB AREA - NIGHT

A VORTEX OF SNOW-FLAKES. THE CAMERA pulls back from a window out of which we've been looking into the night. As we move back from the window we see, reflected by it, a GLOWING BLUE DOME surrounded by a mass of whirring machinery.

VEIDT, DREIBERG and RORSCHACH enter the lab and approach the BLUE DOME - a BUBBLE OF PURE ENERGY.

Inside its shimmering contours is a little corner of the Arizona Test Base. JON OSTERMAN tightens a screw, and sets the movement of JANEY's watch into its housing - totally oblivious to the strange trio watching him from twenty-four years in the future.

VEIDT

Gentlemen, the past. Unfolding before your eyes.

(pause)

Stand back from the field. It'll blow you to bits.

DREIBERG

What is it? How does it work?

VEIDT

It's a tachyon chamber. It generates subatomic particles which flow backward in time.

(smiling)

There are other worlds, Daniel, other timelines -- existing parallel to our own --

DREIBERG

Adrian... you've lost it.

VEIDT

(pointing to the tachyon chamber)
I've seen them! I've seen them in there.

(pause)

In some of them - only a few - the human race survives. And it survives because Dr. Manhattan never existed.

He moves closer to the tachyon bubble. Off to one side is the camera which feeds to the monitor in the video room - and beside it, mounted on a tripod, is a high-powered TELESCOPIC RIFLE.

VEIDT (CONTD)

The creation of Dr. Manhattan threw the world balance of power totally out of whack. His absence - even for a week - virtually guaranteed a catastrophic war. -- Now do you see what I'm going to do? I'm going to change the past! -- And the neat thing is - this life-saving event is made possible by harnessing the energy from thousands of nuclear explosions happening all over the Northern Hemisphere. Veidt Industries has an office with a receptor-transmitter in every major city... You wouldn't believe the cost...

(smiling)

And yes, I do hold the patent.

DREIBERG

(numbed)

You've destroyed the world to save it?

VEIDT

(smiling)

You can see why the Comedian was jealous.

VEIDT turns to the tachyon chamber. Inside, JON OSTERMAN fits the glass crystal back into place on JANEY's watch. VEIDT looks on in fascination.

VEIDT (CONTD)

To begin with I could only watch the past. Today, we can reach out and touch it.

He steps over to the rifle and peers through its telescopic sight.

VEIDT (CONTD)

(turning to face them)

In a minute I'll open a small hole in the bubble. Then I'll put a bullet through it, straight into Jon Osterman's heart... and Dr. Manhattan will never be born.

RORSCHACH

... And they call me a fucking nut.

DREIBERG

Adrian. It's too late! The world's blowing up as we stand here!

VEIDT

(very patiently)

Daniel, if I kill Jon in the past, none of this will happen. We won't even be here, will we?

DREIBERG

And what if you're wrong?

VEIDT

I'm not.

DREIBERG

What if you're wrong?

VEIDT

Then I'll just have to apologize and do five million years community service. Christ!

(shouting)

I'm doing what I have to do to save the godforsaken human race!!!

VEIDT turns to the tachyon chamber. Inside, twenty-four years ago, JON OSTERMAN is packing his jeweler's tools, folding his swatch of black velvet.

VEIDT (CONTD)

Your problem, Dan, is lack of vision. You spent all those years chasing after muggers and drug dealers, and jaywalkers... as if the world was any better for it. As if any of it mattered.

DREIBERG

You ruthless son of a bitch! You really believe this mad-scientist bullshit is going to save the world?

VEIDT

We'd better hope so. -- It's almost time.

He kicks a floor switch. Giant generators begin to hum. VEIDT bends over the rifle and peers through the sight.

259. VEIDT'S POV - THROUGH CROSSHAIRS

In the past JON OSTERMAN has entered the Intrinsic Field Centre and is about to step into the test chamber.

260. INT. KARNAK - LAB - THAT MOMENT

A LUMINESCENT WHITE SPOT appears on the surface of the tachyon bubble. There's a hideous WHINE as a tiny HOLE begins to open up - DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF VEIDT'S RIFLE. His finger closes around the trigger...

... and with a TERRIBLE CRASH, the LAB WALL COLLAPSES BEHIND HIM. VEIDT DIVES BACKWARD, DODGING RUBBLE...

... as a BLUE GIANT, THIRTY FEET TALL, steps into the lab -- with LAURIE at his side.

DR. MANHATTAN

VEIDT?

VEIDT

Jon! Get back! You don't understand!

DR. MANHATTAN stares down at the TACHYON BUBBLE and sees himself -- his former self -- in the I.F. chamber at the Arizona Test Base. His eyes go wide. Even he's surprised

In the ensuing panic, RORSCHACH dives at VEIDT. VEIDT manages to sidestep him, frantically trying to get to his rifle. The HOLE IN THE BUBBLE has grown to the size of a quarter. VEIDT lunges toward the rifle. LAURIE's directly in his path. He shoves her aside; they grapple; he flings her to the ground, pulls a stun gun from under his cloak and points it at her.

-- and a millisecond later, he's aiming at NOTHING. DR. MANHATTAN has instantaneously TELEPORTED LAURIE across the room, out of his line of fire.

VEIDT looks up in horror, just in time to see a BLUE BOLT OF LIGHTNING launching itself from DR. MANHATTAN's outstretched finger --

VEIDT

NO!!!

-- and in the wink of an eye, he's VAPORIZED. All that's left is a pair of CHARRED BOOTS, still standing upright.

DREIBERG rushes over to LAURIE and takes her in his arms.

LAURIE

What was he doing?

DREIBERG

Trying to change the past. He said it was the only way to save the world...

LAURIE

(breaking down)

It's too late!

DR. MANHATTAN stares at the TACHYON BUBBLE, mesmerized. Inside, the door to the I.F. chamber has just swung SHUT on a terrified JON OSTERMAN.

DR. MANHATTAN

He was right.

RORSCHACH, LAURIE and DREIBERG stare up at the blue behemoth in puzzlement. DR. MANHATTAN begins to SHRINK to normal size. He runs his hands over the surface of the tachyon bubble. BRIGHT BLUE SPARKS shoot off in all directions

DR. MANHATTAN (CONTD)

He did it. Veidt broke the code. It's so elegant. It's so obvious.

DR. MANHATTAN's off in another world, as usual. He wears a BEATIFIC SMILE as he watches his own imminent destruction in the tachyon chamber.

LAURIE

Jon...

DR. MANHATTAN

Space and time. I finally understand, Laurie.
I see it all now.

RORSCHACH

Uh huh?

DR. MANHATTAN

I see what the watchmaker made. I see the universe!

He lifts his arms. PARTICLES OF LIGHT appear from nowhere and whiz around his body like superaccelerated fireflies. The lights in the room dim. It's as if DR. MANHATTAN is absorbing all the power of the world into his own massive frame.

DR. MANHATTAN

My work here is finished...

The others cower. They sense that something large is about to happen. In the past, JON OSTERMAN is pounding on the glass of the test chamber. In the present, DR. MANHATTAN reaches out to touch the tiny hole in time.

He does, and in a BLAZE of BLINDING BLUE LIGHT the tiny rift EXPANDS into a SHIMMERING FISSURE. DR. MANHATTAN PEELS BACK ITS EDGES AND STEPS THROUGH... INTO THE PAST.

261. INT. TEST CHAMBER - THAT MOMENT

JON OSTERMAN turns away from the observation panel. To his utter bewilderment, a HUGE BLUE FIGURE - surrounded by sparks and smiling gloriously - has materialized in the chamber behind him. JON can't speak; he can only gape in disbelief.

DR. MANHATTAN

Don't be afraid, Jon. I'll be with you.

A second before the particle cannons kick in, DR. MANHATTAN steps forward and FUSES WITH JON, their bodies becoming one.

For a moment JON is still visible, with DR. MANHATTAN's frame surrounding him, like a translucent shield of pure energy. DR. MANHATTAN then coalesces into a solid protective HUSK around him. As the chamber begins to glow, a network of HAIRLINE CRACKS spreads across the shell of his body. BLUE LIGHT spills through the seams. He spreads his hands - not in pain, but in triumph - and with a blinding FLASH, DR. MANHATTAN explodes outward, a million fragments merging with nothingness...

...to expose a dumbstruck JON OSTERMAN in his place. The blue light dims and the chamber reverts to normal. Miraculously, he's alive - astonished, but perfectly intact.

262. INT. ARIZONA TEST LAB - A MOMENT LATER

The timelock door pops open and JON staggers out into the midst of his awed colleagues, who've seen everything through the observation panel.

DR. GLASS

What in the name of God...

The SCIENTISTS advance cautiously toward the chamber. JANEY, sobbing, rushes forward and throws her arms around the dazed JON. As she clings to him, her face pressed tightly against his chest, he looks down at his hands; his fist is still closed around...

JON

Your watch, Janey. I fixed your watch...

SCIENTIST

LOOK!!

The SCIENTIST is staring wide-eyed at the rear of the chamber... which isn't there. Instead, there's a rippling, irregular RUPTURE -- a pulsating HOLE IN TIME -- and visible beyond it are three odd-looking and very frightened figures: DREIBERG, LAURIE, and RORSCHACH.

263. REVERSE ANGLE - VEIDT'S LAB - THE PRESENT

DREIBERG, LAURIE and RORSCHACH stare THROUGH the rupture at the astonished SCIENTISTS.

LAURIE

What happened...?

DREIBERG

He saved himself. He changed the past.

LAURIE

Where did he go?

Before DREIBERG can suggest an answer, the cleft in time begins to THROB and SHIMMER, slowly SEALING ITSELF OFF before their eyes. For a moment everything's back to normal...

... and then, to their mounting horror, the room they're in begins to DISSOLVE AROUND THEM...FADING AWAY INTO A BLANK WHITE VOID.

A sudden percussive POP. The white void seems to shrivel around them, collapsing into a protective bubble of force as they plunge into...

264. EXT. VORTEX EFFECT

DREIBERG, LAURIE and RORSCHACH spinning and tumbling through an other-dimensional funhouse of sound and color. If space and time could be compressed into a single extravagant E-ticket joyride, this would be it. Their bodies contract and distend, warp and elongate; their tortured mouths emit soundless shrieks; and then, before they know it, they find themselves deposited...

265. EXT. NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

... smack in the middle of a busy intersection. The three of them materialize from nowhere; a southbound VAN swerves to avoid them, slamming into a row of parked cars, and a northbound TAXICAB does the same, knocking over a fire hydrant.

LAURIE

Dan, is this... is this New York??

DREIBERG

Those cars. What year is this??

LAURIE

Everything's changed...

It's a disorienting world they've landed in. In fact, it's our world, our New York, and everything... the cars, the clothing, the very look of the city... seems just a trifle out of whack...

RORSCHACH

Hnrrrr... we never happened.

BYSTANDERS begin to cluster about, laughing and taunting, highly amused by the obvious puzzlement of the gaudily-outfitted trio in their midst. There are, of course, no costumed heroes in our world, and their sudden presence prompts a virtual Babel of speculation among the onlookers: Nuts? Fruits? Out-of-work actors?

RORSCHACH takes a swing at one of the curious who gets a touch too close, and the mood begins to turn hostile. The CROWD, now grown to several dozen people, is threatening to block the intersection altogether; a MOUNTED POLICEMAN rides up on his stallion and blows a shrill WHISTLE.

DREIBERG

Cops on horses! Is that past or future?

RORSCHACH

(drily)

Both.

266. EXT. NEWSSTAND - THAT MOMENT

The same newsstand we've seen all along... but luckily, here in our world, the headlines are only mildly discouraging: "RUSSIAN SUMMIT TALKS COLLAPSE." Like everyone else, our old friend the NEWS VENDOR is gaping at the ruckus on the street.

NEWS VENDOR

Jesus Christ, it ain't Halloween is it?

His sidekick, the SMALL BLACK KID who reads comic books, points to the befuddled trio on the street and LAUGHS in gleeful recognition.

KID

Shit, man! It's Rorschach! And Night Owl!

NEWS VENDOR
What y'talkin' about?

KID
Superheroes! Check it out!

He thrusts a COMIC BOOK into the NEWS VENDOR's hand and races off to join the growing throng of rubbernecker. The NEWS VENDOR stares down at the costumed characters in the comic book - "WATCHMEN" - then throws a cockeyed squint at their real-life counterparts on the street.

267. EXT. STREET - THAT MOMENT - NIGHT

HORNES BLARE. ALL TRAFFIC HAS STOPPED. The intersection is mobbed with curious ONLOOKERS. By now a half-dozen BEAT COPS have arrived to clear the streets and restore order.

COP I
Break it up! Stand back!

COP II
Come on, you three. If this is some kind of publicity stunt...

DREIBERG, LAURIE and RORSCHACH have fallen into a tight circle, back to back. They don't know what to expect and they're poised for a brawl. The taunting crowd gives them plenty of room; even the COPS are hesitant to advance.

LAURIE
Dan... what do we do now?

DREIBERG
(panicked)
Wherever we are, it's better than what we left.
Backs together...

LAURIE
How the hell can we explain?...
They're not going to believe us, are they?

RORSCHACH
They'd better.

And on RORSCHACH's final vicious HISS, we SHOCK CUT TO BLACK and

FADE OUT.

THE END