



**ALAN MOORE**  
**DAVE GIBBONS**



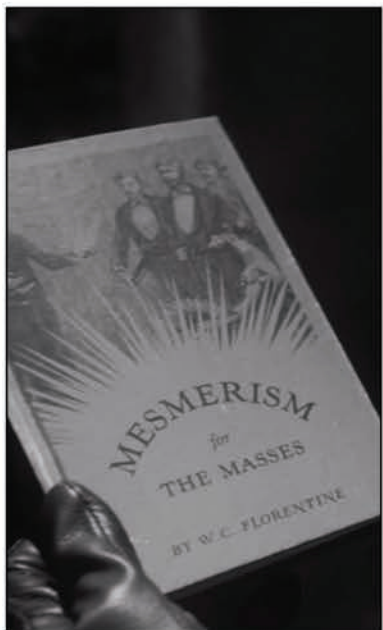
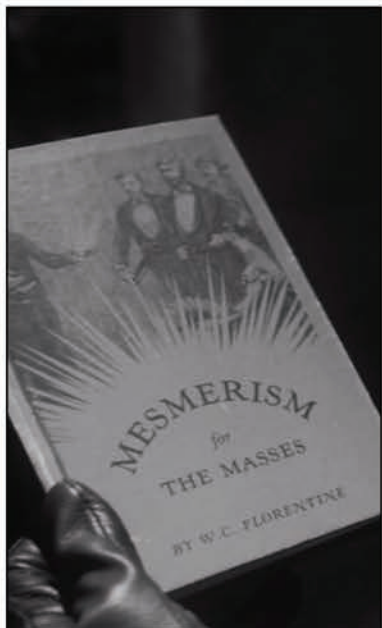
**ADAPTED FROM THE HBO SERIES**

**LINDSAY SCOTT**

**WATCHMEN**











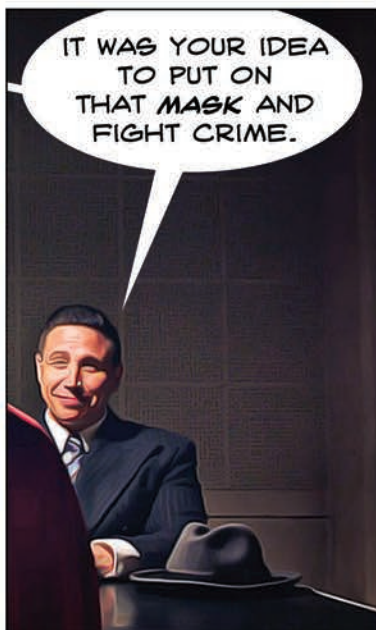
**THIS**  
**EXTRAORDINARY**  
**BEING**





HOODED JUSTICE...  
IT ALL STARTED  
WITH YOU.

YOU'RE THE  
ALPHA, PAL.



IT WAS YOUR IDEA  
TO PUT ON  
THAT MASK AND  
FIGHT CRIME.



AS FELLOW ENFORCERS  
OF THE LAW, I GOTTA  
TELL YOU WHAT AN  
HONOR IT IS TO SIT  
ACROSS FROM YOU  
RIGHT NOW.

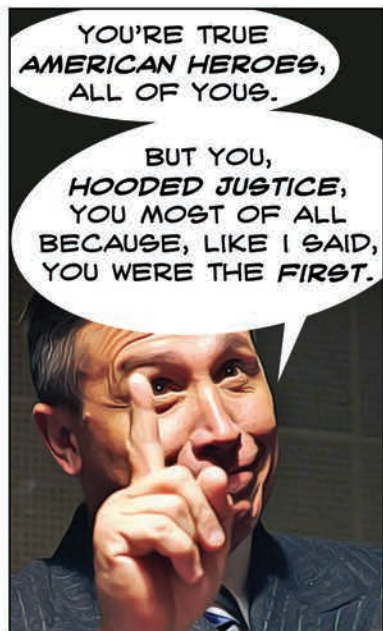


CAPTAIN AXIS,  
KING MOB, MOLOCH-



THE WORST VILLAINS  
IN THE CITY, ALL IN JAIL  
THANKS TO YOU  
AND YOUR BUDDIES,

THE MINUTEMEN.



YOU'RE TRUE  
AMERICAN HEROES,  
ALL OF YOU.

BUT YOU,  
HOODED JUSTICE,  
YOU MOST OF ALL  
BECAUSE, LIKE I SAID,  
YOU WERE THE FIRST.



HEY,  
HELP US  
SETTLE  
A BET.

WHAT'S THE STORY  
WITH THAT NOOSE  
AROUND YOUR NECK?



SEE, I-I THINK IT'S  
AN EXECUTIONER THING

YOU KNOW,  
LET YOUR ENEMIES  
KNOW YOU MEAN  
BUSINESS.

BUT, JERRY HERE--  
JERRY, HOW ABOUT  
YOU TELL HIM WHAT YOU  
THINK THAT NOOSE  
IS FOR?



SEX STUFF.





WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?

WE WANT YOU TO TAKE THAT FUCKING HOOD OFF SO WE CAN TAKE A PHOTO OF YOUR BEAUTIFUL FACE.



NEVER.



LOOK, PAL, WE DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, BUT WE KNOW WHAT YOU DO AND...WHO YOU DO.

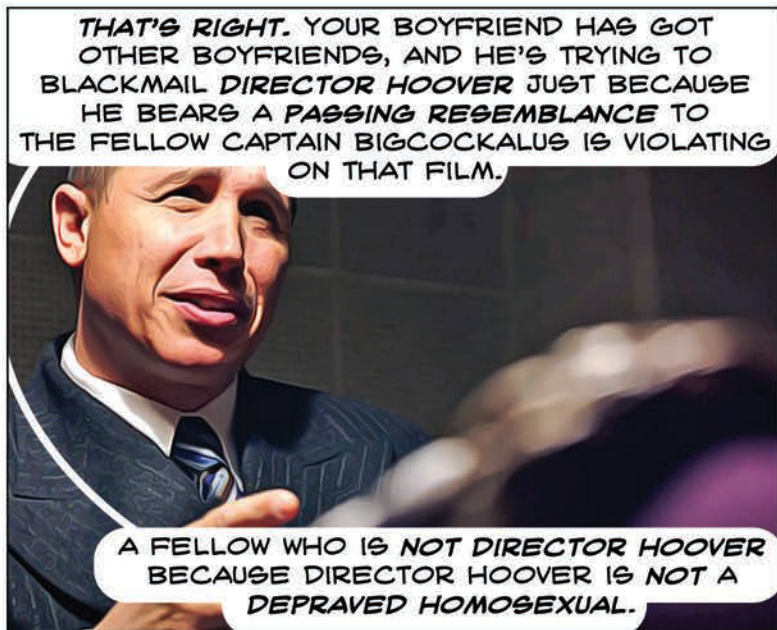
CAPTAIN METROPOLIS, AKA NELSON GARDNER, AKA YOUR FAIRY PRINCESS. HE'S GOT A SAFE BEHIND THE PAINTING OF THE WHITE HORSE IN HIS BOUDOIR.

NOW, IN THAT SAFE IS A ROLL OF FILM.

JERRY, YOU WANNA TELL HIM WHAT'S ON THAT FILM?



SEX STUFF.



THAT'S RIGHT. YOUR BOYFRIEND HAS GOT OTHER BOYFRIENDS, AND HE'S TRYING TO BLACKMAIL DIRECTOR HOOVER JUST BECAUSE HE BEARS A PASSING RESEMBLANCE TO THE FELLOW CAPTAIN BIGCOCKALUS IS VIOLATING ON THAT FILM.

A FELLOW WHO IS NOT DIRECTOR HOOVER BECAUSE DIRECTOR HOOVER IS NOT A DEPRAVED HOMOSEXUAL.



SO, YOU'RE GONNA BRING US THAT FILM, AND WE'RE GONNA RIP UP THE PHOTO WE'RE ABOUT TO TAKE OF YOU.





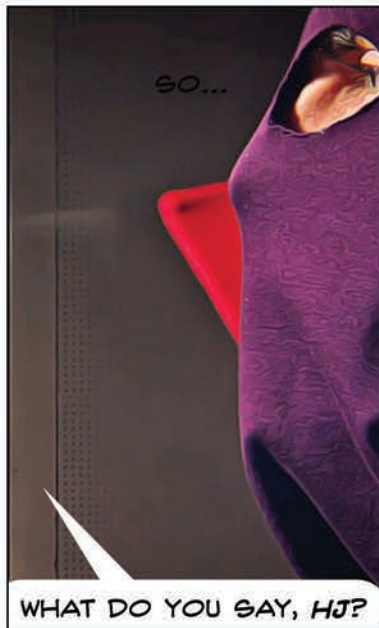
WHY SHOULD I  
TRUST YOU?



BECAUSE JERRY AND  
ME, WE WON'T SHOW  
IT TO *ANYBODY*. HELL,  
NOBODY EVEN KNOWS  
WE'RE *HERE* WITH YOU  
RIGHT NOW.

THIS IS ALL  
HUSH-HUSH.

JUST THE WAY  
YOU LIKE IT,  
*SWEETHEART*.



SO...

WHAT DO YOU SAY, *HJ*?



WELL, WELL.  
AIN'T YOU *Pretty*.

JERRY...YOU WANNA  
DO THE HONORS?

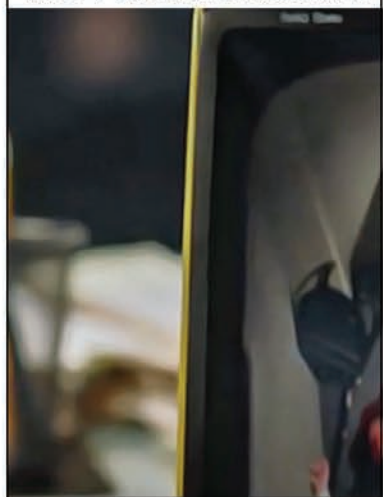


SAY *CHEESE*.

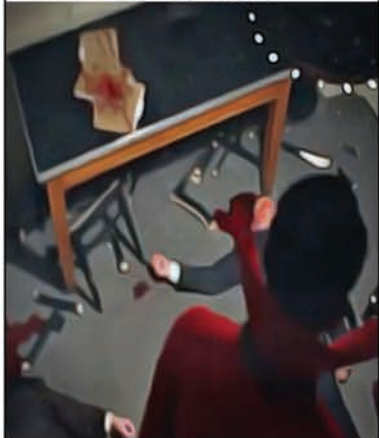




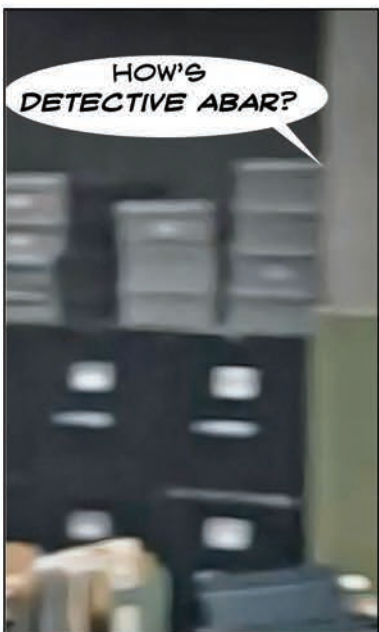
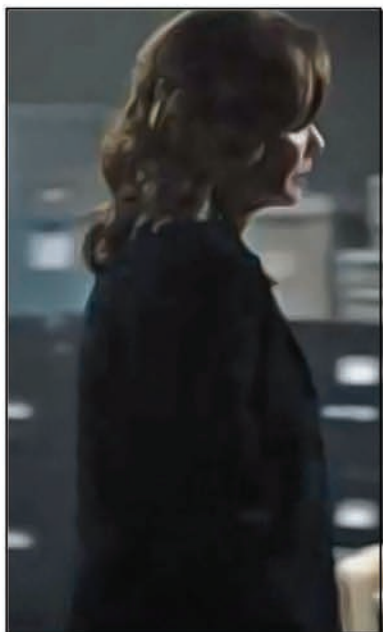
I SHOULD PROBABLY  
BE WORRIED THAT  
I JUST **MURDERED**  
TWO FEDERAL AGENTS



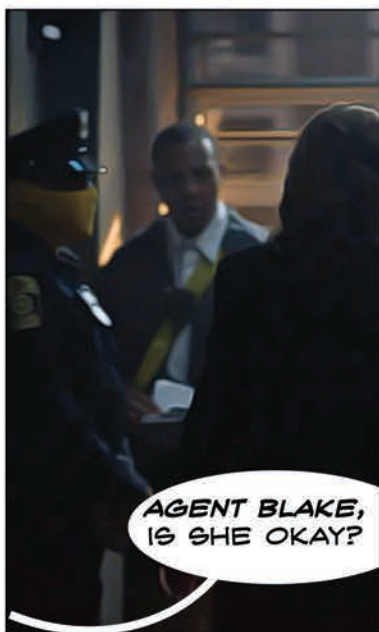
BUT ALL I COULD  
THINK ABOUT IS THAT  
**NELSON GARDNER** IS  
CHEATING ON ME,  
WITH **J. EDGAR HOOVER**  
NO LESS...



TURN THAT **SHIT** OFF.

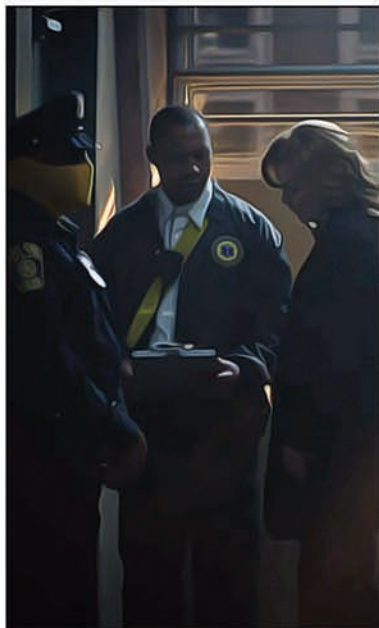


HOW'S  
**DETECTIVE ABAR?**



**AGENT BLAKE,**  
IS SHE OKAY?





IS THAT THE *RELEASE*?

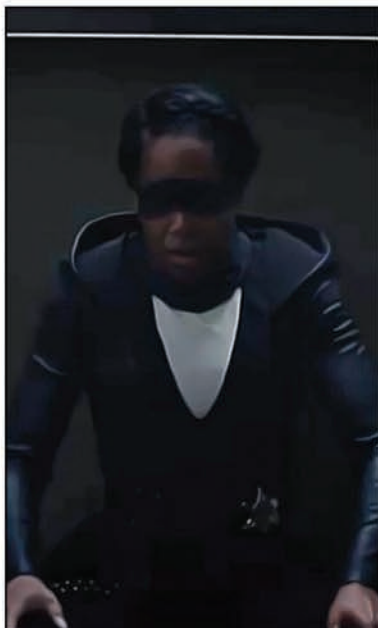
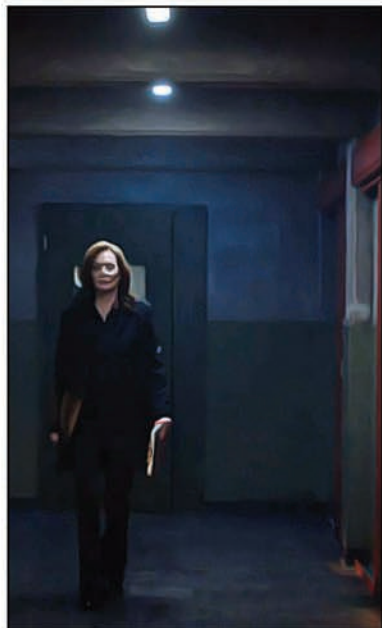
YEAH. UM, YOU *REALLY* NEED TO GET HER TO *SIGN IT*.

AND YOU NEED TO MOVE HER TO AN *ACTUAL HOSPITAL* BEFORE SHE GOES INTO A *COMA*.



SHE NEEDS *HELP*!





DO YOU KNOW HOW *NOSTALGIA* WORKS? OR HOW THEY MAKE IT? YOU KNOW, THEY INSERT THESE LITTLE CHIPS INTO *YOUR BRAIN*, AND THEY HARVEST YOUR *MEMORIES*. AND THEN THEY PUT THEM IN A LITTLE PILL AND YOU POP ONE, AND YOU GET TO EXPERIENCE THAT SHIT ALL OVER AGAIN. IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE FOR OLDER FOLKS, YOU KNOW, *DEMENTIA TREATMENT*, BUT THAT LIMITED THE MARKET BECAUSE, YOU KNOW, WHO WANTS TO BE IN THE *PRESENT* WHEN YOU CAN LIVE IN THE *PAST*?



WELL,  
YOU KNOW THE REST.

PEOPLE GOT HOOKED,  
DEPENDENCY, ODS.



SO, REDFORD AND  
THE FDA OUTLAWED IT,  
AND THE COMPANY  
THAT MADE IT  
HAD TO STOP.



AND DO YOU KNOW  
WHO OWNS  
THAT COMPANY?

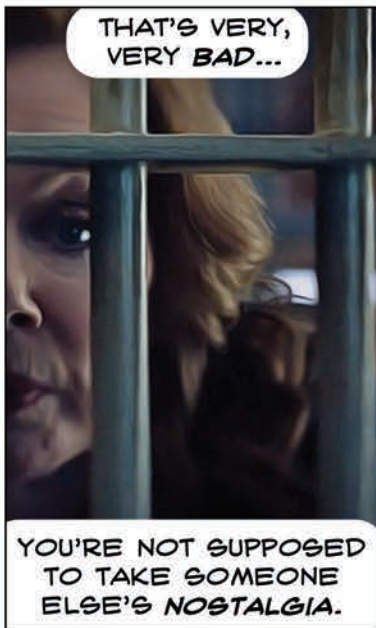
LADY TRIEU.





COINCIDENCE.

HEY, MAYBE SHE KNOWS YOUR GRANDPA. THOSE WERE HIS PILLS YOU SWALLOWED, ANGELA.



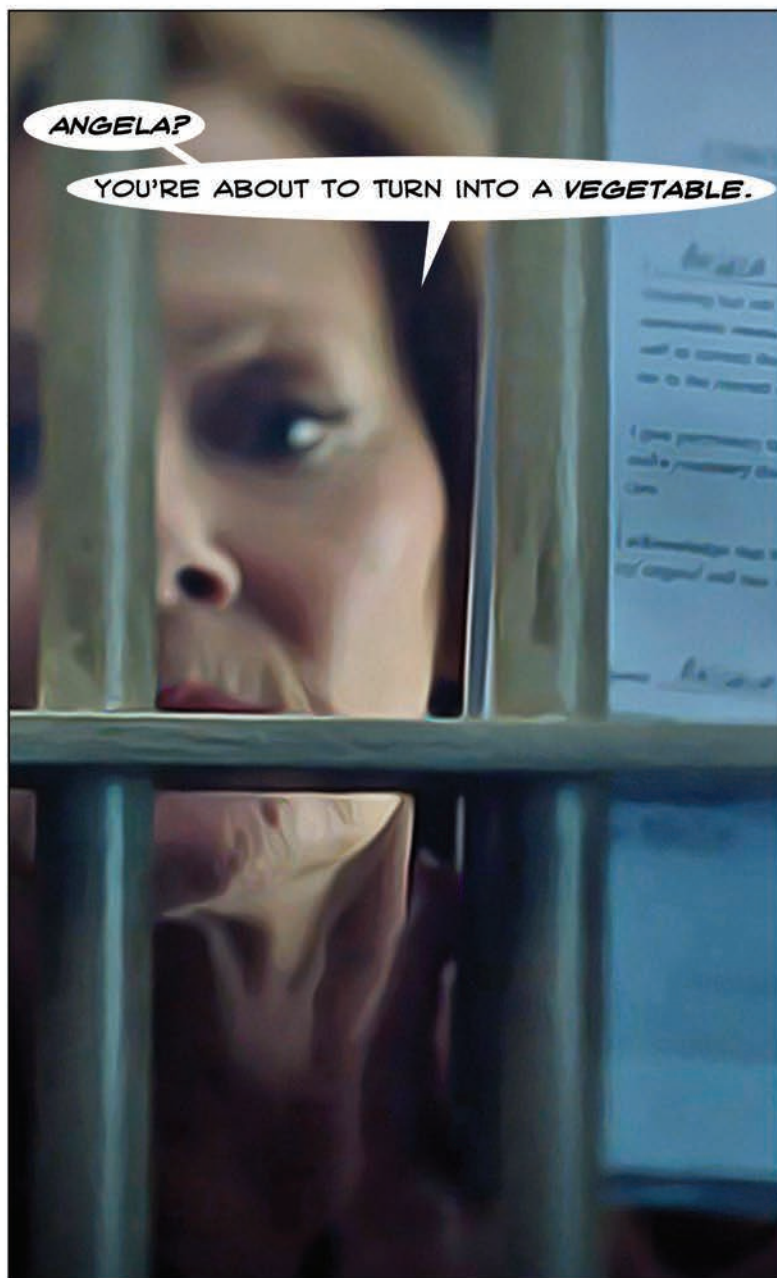
THAT'S VERY, VERY BAD...

YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO TAKE SOMEONE ELSE'S NOSTALGIA.



YOU NEED TO SIGN THIS *RELEASE* SO WE CAN GET YOUR STOMACH PUMPED.

I CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOUR *CONSENT*.

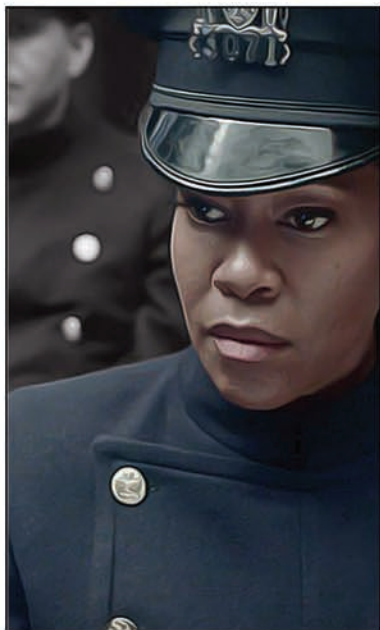
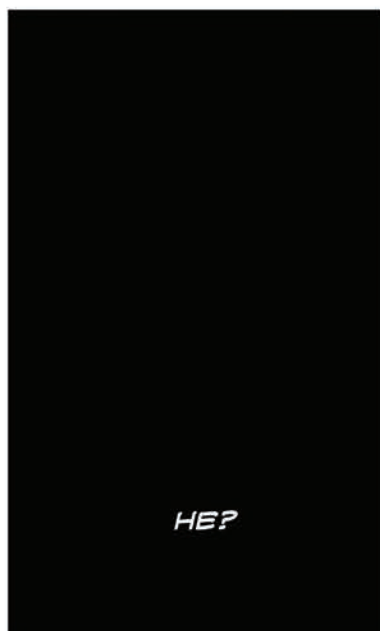
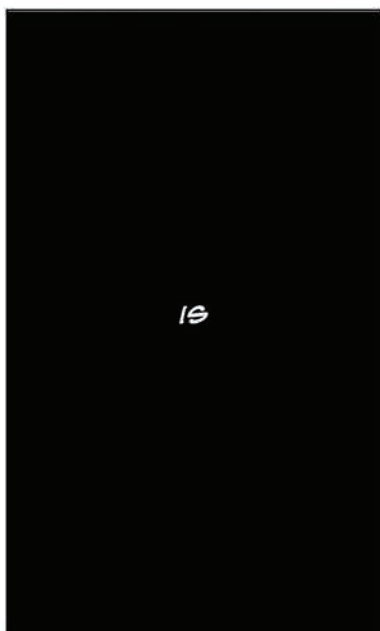


ANGELA?

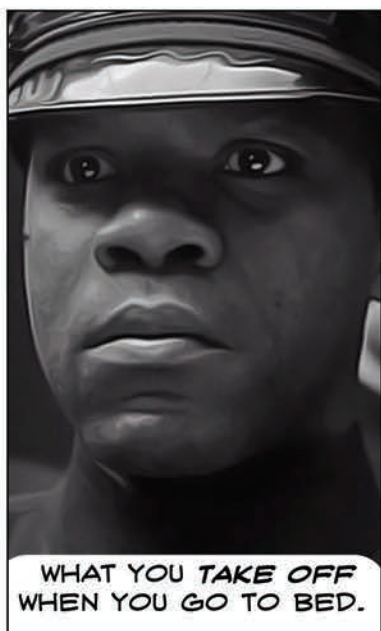
YOU'RE ABOUT TO TURN INTO A *VEGETABLE*.



IS IT *STARTING*?







I WANT YOU  
TO THINK ABOUT  
WHAT YOU'RE *WEARING*,

WHAT YOU *PUT ON*  
WHEN YOU WAKE UP,

WHAT YOU *TAKE OFF*  
WHEN YOU GO TO BED.



THE *UNIFORM* A MAN  
WEARS CHANGES HIM.

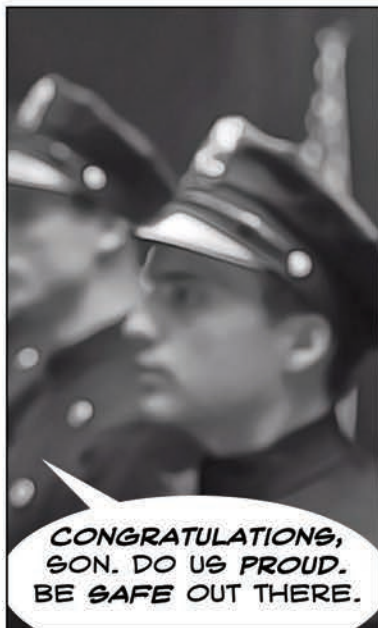
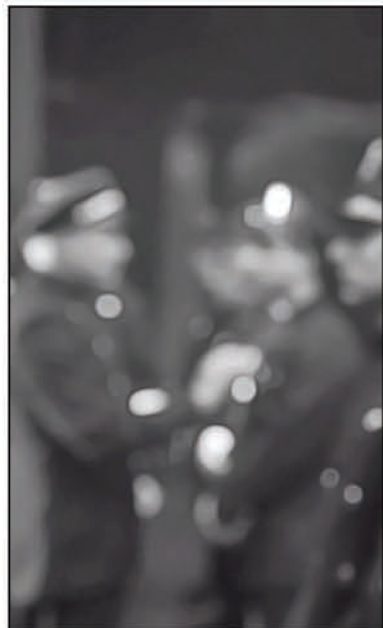
AND GOD BLESS YOU  
FOR TAKING AN *OATH*...

AND HONOR  
THE *BADGE*.

MAKE SURE YOURS  
CHANGES YOU  
FOR THE BETTER.

TO UPHOLD *THE LAW*...





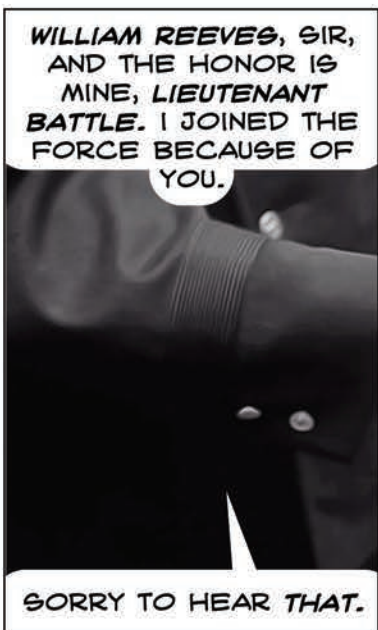
CONGRATULATIONS,  
SON. DO US PROUD.  
BE SAFE OUT THERE.



CONGRATULATIONS,  
SON. DO US PROUD.  
BE SAFE OUT THERE.



LOOKS LIKE I GET  
THE HONOR OF PUTTING  
A BADGE ON YOU.  
WHAT'S YOUR NAME,  
OFFICER?



WILLIAM REEVES, SIR,  
AND THE HONOR IS  
MINE, LIEUTENANT  
BATTLE. I JOINED THE  
FORCE BECAUSE OF  
YOU.

SORRY TO HEAR THAT.



BEWARE OF  
THE CYCLOPS.

WHAT?

CONGRATULATIONS,  
SON. DO US PROUD.  
BE SAFE OUT THERE.



HERE YOU GO, *JUNE*.

THANK YOU, *OFFICER*.



THANKS FOR COMING TODAY.  
MEANT A LOT TO SEE A *FRIENDLY* FACE.

I WAS THERE FOR *WORK*, NOT YOU.

SO, WHY ARE YOU WRITING A *STORY* ABOUT ME?

BECAUSE THE *AMSTERDAM* SAYS  
A *NEGRO* CADET MAKING THE *FORCE* IS *BIG NEWS*.

SO, I'M *BIG NEWS*.

YOU'RE A *BIG SOMETHING*, BUT IT AIN'T *NEWS*, *OFFICER*.

YOU GONNA KEEP *CALLING* ME THAT?

IF YOU DON'T *WANT* ME TO CALL YOU *OFFICER*,  
YOU PROBABLY SHOULD'VE CHOSEN A *DIFFERENT* LINE OF *WORK*.





ALL RIGHT,  
LET ME *HAVE* IT.

LET YOU HAVE *WHAT*?



I KNOW WHAT  
YOU'RE *THINKING*.

WHAT AM I *THINKING*?



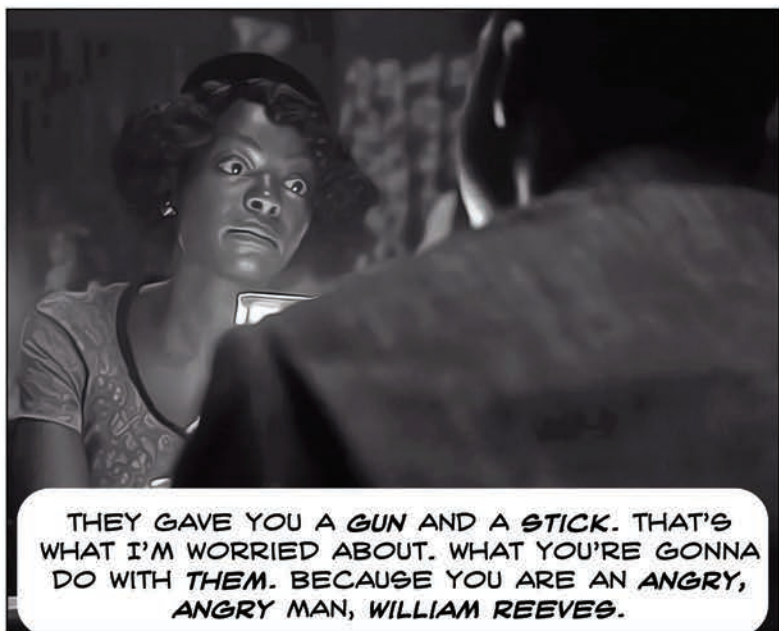
I'VE JOINED THE *ENEMY*.  
THE POLICE IN THIS  
CITY *SMOTHER* OUR  
PEOPLE UNDER THEIR  
SHOES.

LIEUTENANT *BATTLE*  
IS A TOM, AND NOW  
I AM A TOM *TOO*.



THEY JUST HIRED ME  
FOR THE *PUBLICITY*.  
AND BESIDES ALL  
OF THAT,

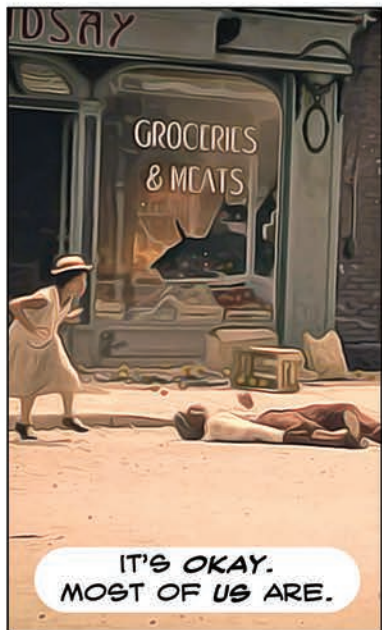
YOU'RE *WORRIED*  
ABOUT ME.



THEY GAVE YOU A *GUN* AND A *STICK*. THAT'S  
WHAT I'M WORRIED ABOUT. WHAT YOU'RE GONNA  
DO WITH *THEM*. BECAUSE YOU ARE AN *ANGRY*,  
*ANGRY* MAN, *WILLIAM REEVES*.



I'M NOT *ANGRY*.



IT'S OKAY.  
MOST OF US ARE.



I'M YOUNG,

I'M HEALTHY,



I GOT THE *JOB*  
I ALWAYS WANTED.



WHAT HAVE I GOT  
TO BE *ANGRY* ABOUT?



FOLKS WERE  
*MURDERED*  
RIGHT IN FRONT  
OF YOU.



THE WHOLE TOWN,  
ALL OF THEM.



THAT WAS  
A LONG TIME AGO.



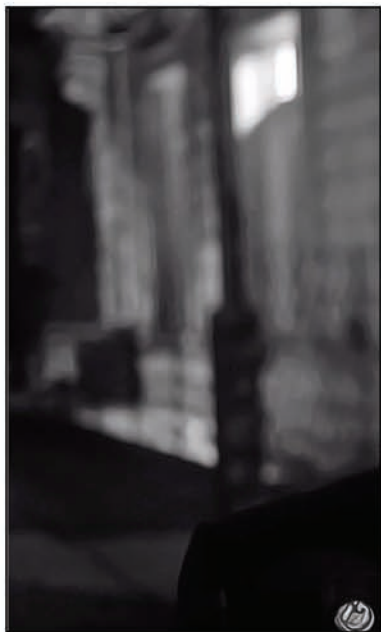
I DON'T WANNA  
LIVE IN THE *PAST*.



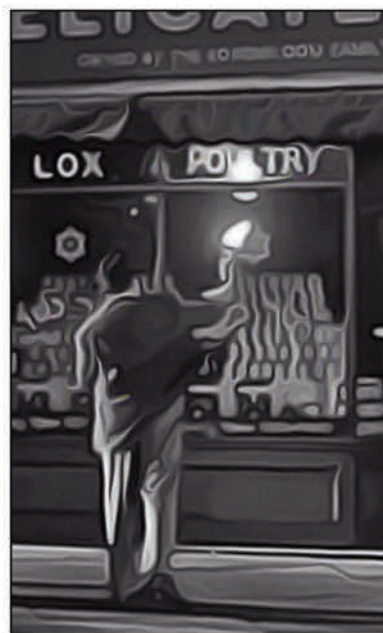
AND THAT, *WILL REEVES*,  
IS WHY YOU ARE SO  
GODDAMNED *ANGRY*.

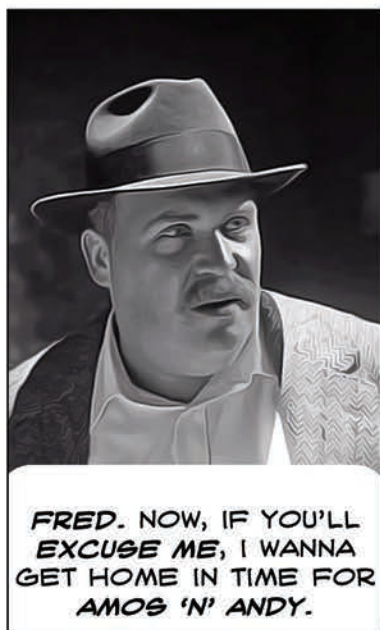

















I SAW WHAT YOU DID.



OH, YOU MEAN AT THAT FINE JEWISH DELICATESSEN OVER THERE?



YOU KNOW, I HEARD THEY HAVE A RAT PROBLEM.

MAYBE ONE CHEWED THROUGH THE WIRES, STARTED A FIRE.

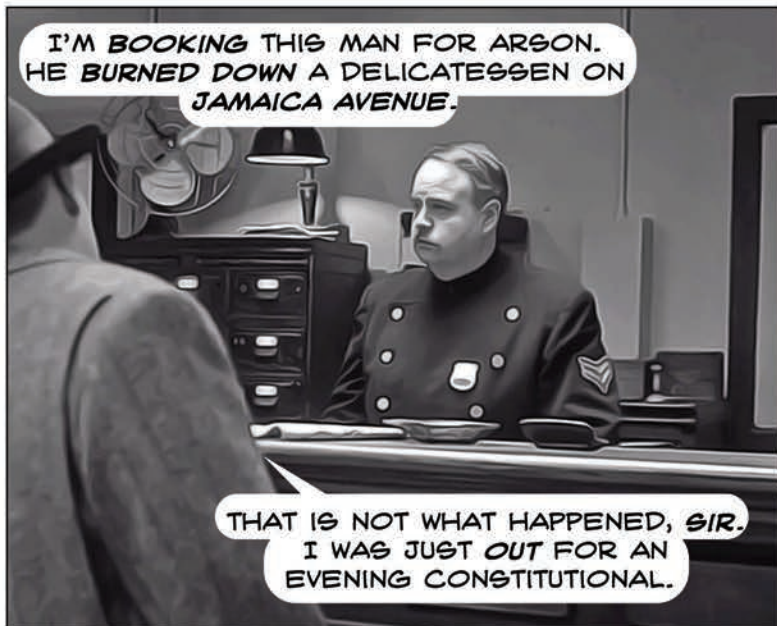


YOU'RE UNDER ARREST.

OH...I SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT.



I'M **BOOKING** THIS MAN FOR ARSON.  
HE **BURNED DOWN** A DELICATESSEN ON  
JAMAICA AVENUE.



THAT IS NOT WHAT HAPPENED, **SIR**.  
I WAS JUST **OUT** FOR AN  
EVENING CONSTITUTIONAL.



MM-HMM.

MUST BE A CASE OF  
**MISTAKEN IDENTITY**.

THAT'S A **LIE**.  
I SAW HIM DO IT  
WITH **MY OWN EYES**!



EVERYTHING **OKAY**?

YES, IT'S **FINE**.



**FELLAS**, THIS **SPOOK**  
IS ACCUSING ME OF  
A **HORRENDOUS CRIME**.

WHO YOU GONNA  
**BELIEVE**,  
ME OR HIM?



WHAT'D YOU JUST CALL OUR **FELLOW OFFICER**?

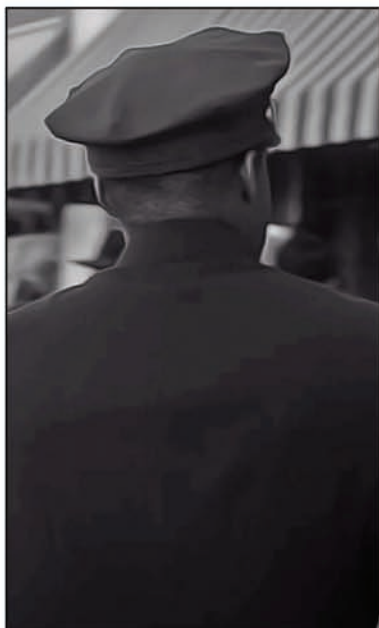
**NOTHING**. SORRY, I-

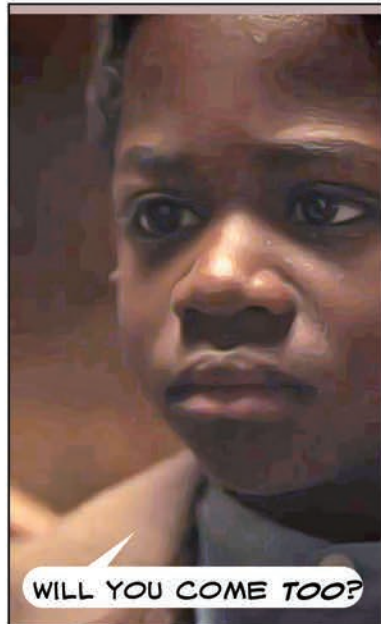
DON'T APOLOGIZE TO ME. YOU APOLOGIZE TO **HIM**.





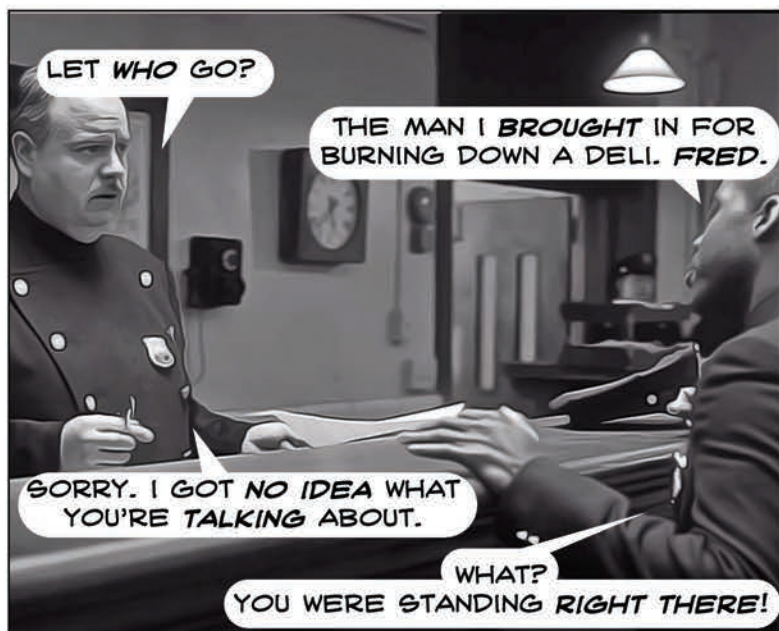
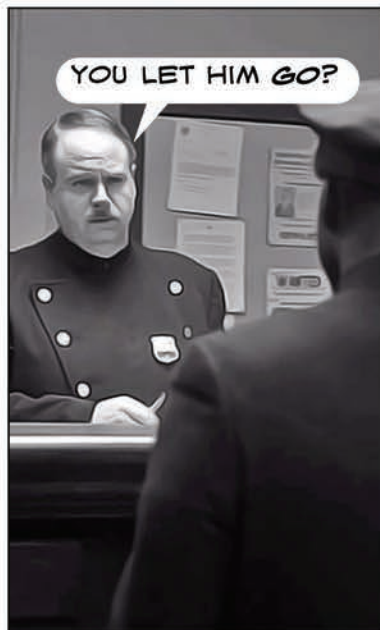




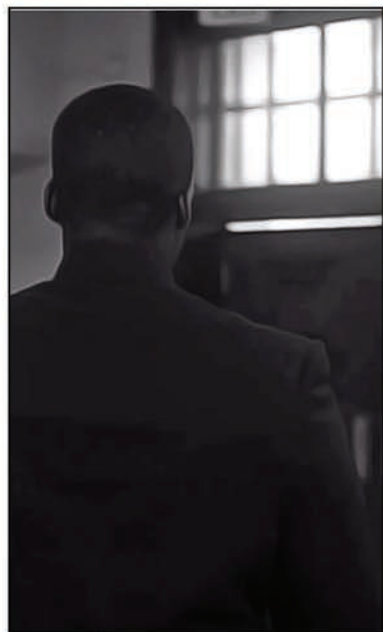


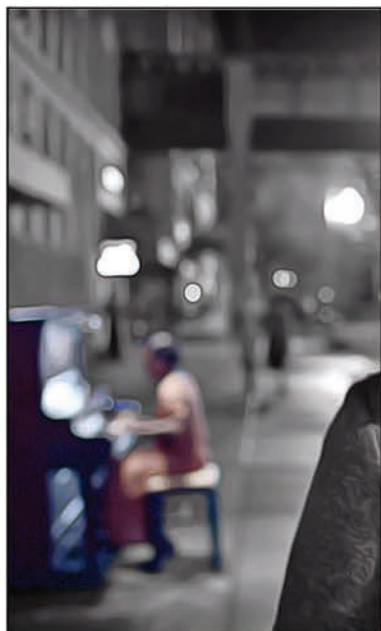
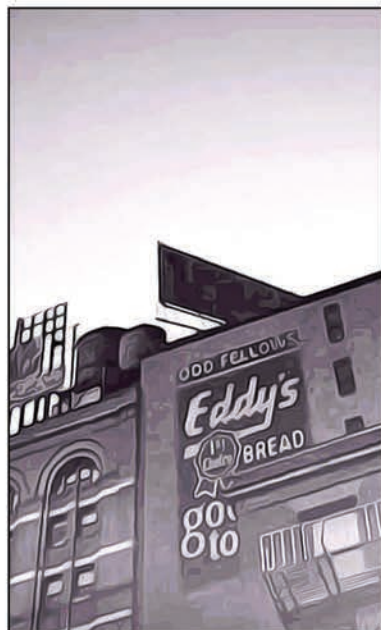












HEY THERE, *REEVES*. NEED A RIDE HOME?

NO THANKS. I *ENJOY* WALKING.

OH. YOU *SURE*?  
WE JUST GOT OFF DUTY.  
HOW ABOUT YOU COME  
JOIN US FOR A *BER*?



I APPRECIATE IT, BUT I GOT AN EARLY *SHIFT* TOMORROW

OH, COME ON. WE'RE *BUYING*.

MAYBE *ANOTHER* TIME.

OKAY THEN...*ANOTHER* TIME.





♪ BEFORE ♪



♪ THE WAY IT USED ♪

♪ TO BE ♪



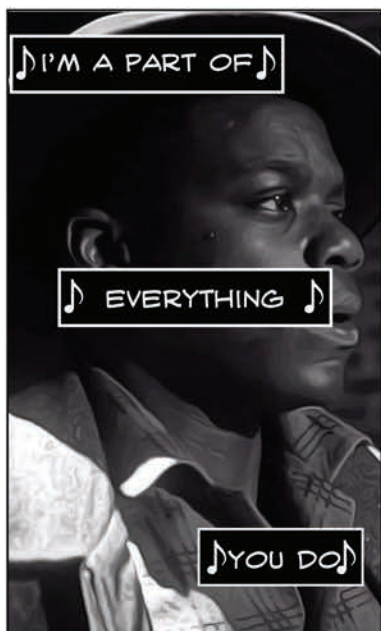
♪ THE STARS WOULD ♪



♪ LIGHT THE WAY ♪



♪ FOR US TO SEE ♪



♪ I'M A PART OF ♪

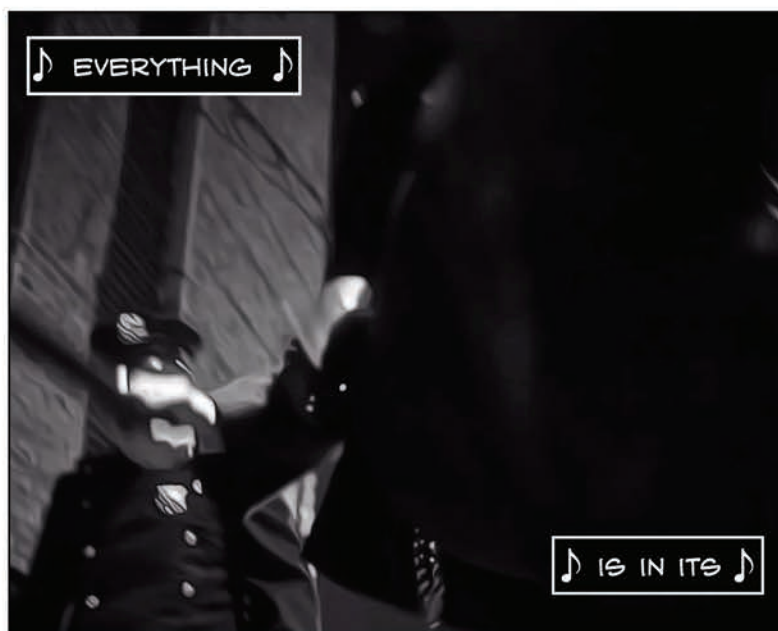
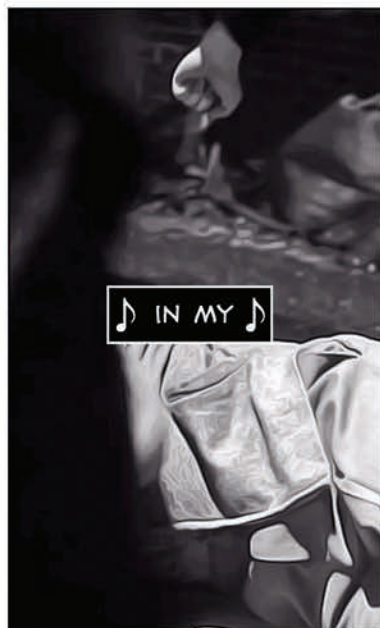
♪ EVERYTHING ♪

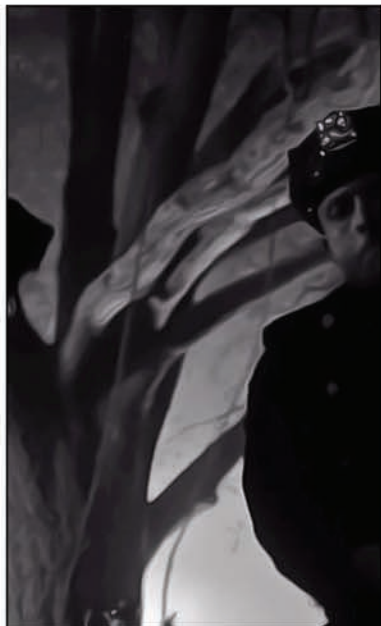
♪ YOU DO ♪



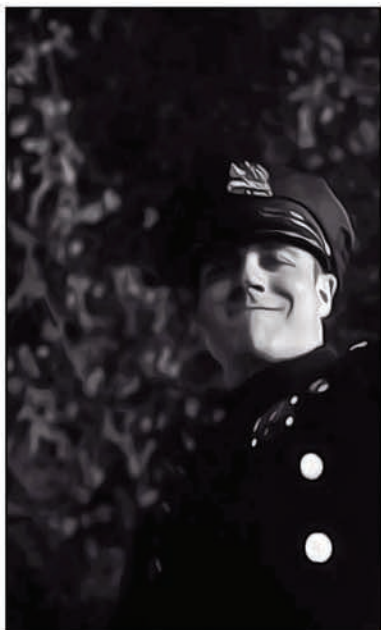
YOU KNOW *WHAT*? ANOTHER TIME *AIN'T* GONNA WORK FOR US.



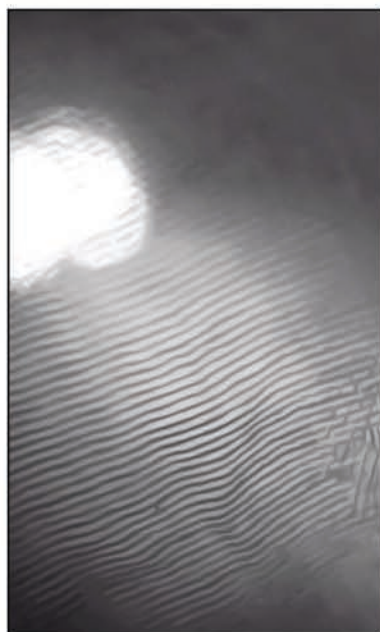
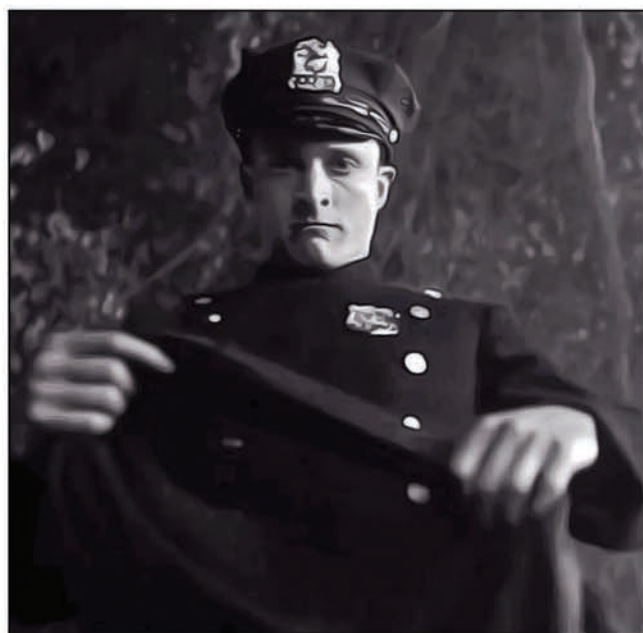


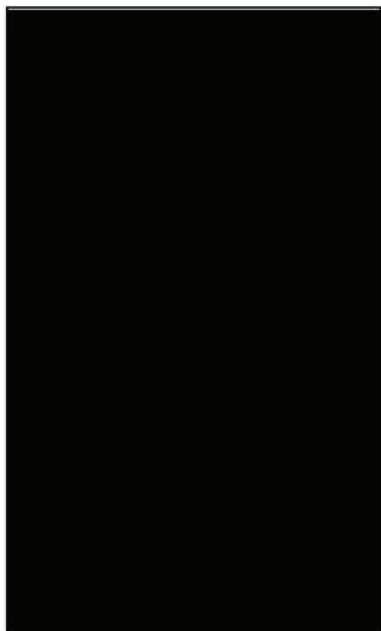


♪ HOLDING YOU IN MY EMBRACE ♪







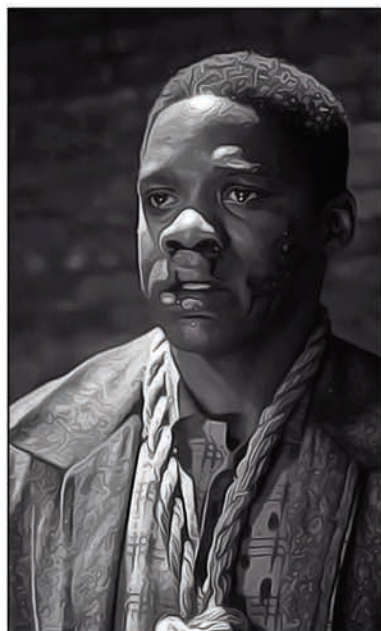


YOU KEEP YOUR  
**BLACK NOSE** OUT  
OF WHITE FOLKS'  
**BUSINESS**, NIGGER.

OR...NEXT TIME,  
WE WON'T  
CUT YOU **DOWN**.





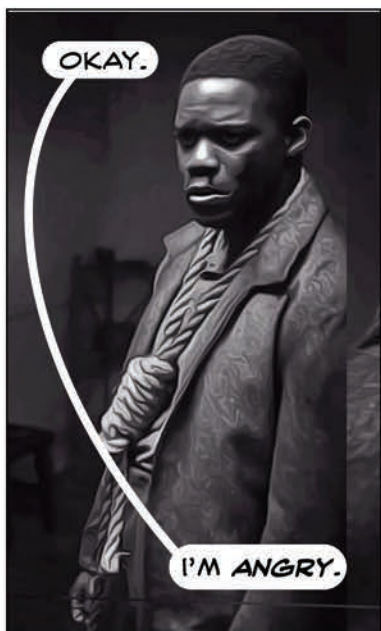
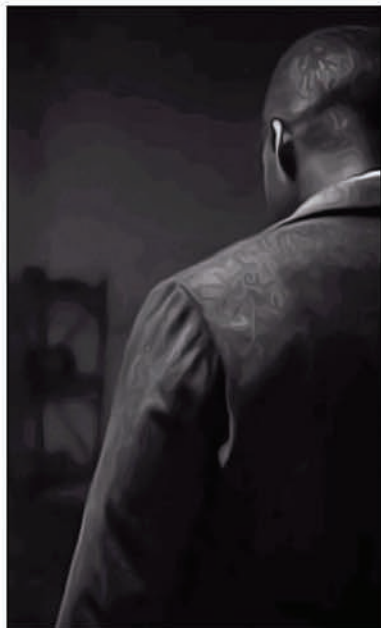


















"HAD THE *HERO* NOT INTERVENED, BOTH VICTIMS OF THE ATTACK WERE *CONVINCED* THEY WOULD *NOT* HAVE SURVIVED THE ENCOUNTER."



"HOWEVER, THE IDENTITY OF THEIR *MYSTERIOUS HOODED SAVIOR* REMAINS UNKNOWN."



HM...

WHY'D YOU PUT IT ON?

THE HOOD.

I *ALREADY* TOLD YOU.

THE *COPS* PUT IT ON-



YEAH, BUT THEN YOU PUT IT BACK ON.

WHY?



I *DON'T* KNOW.

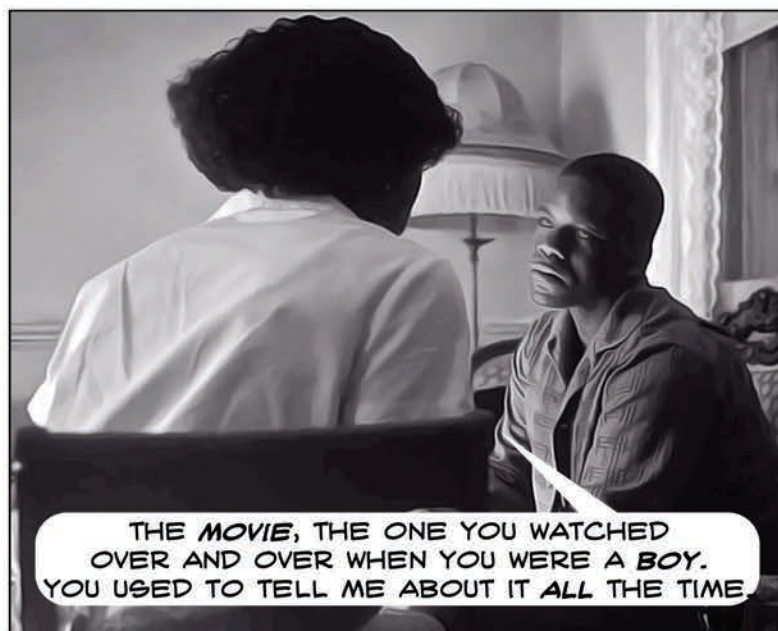




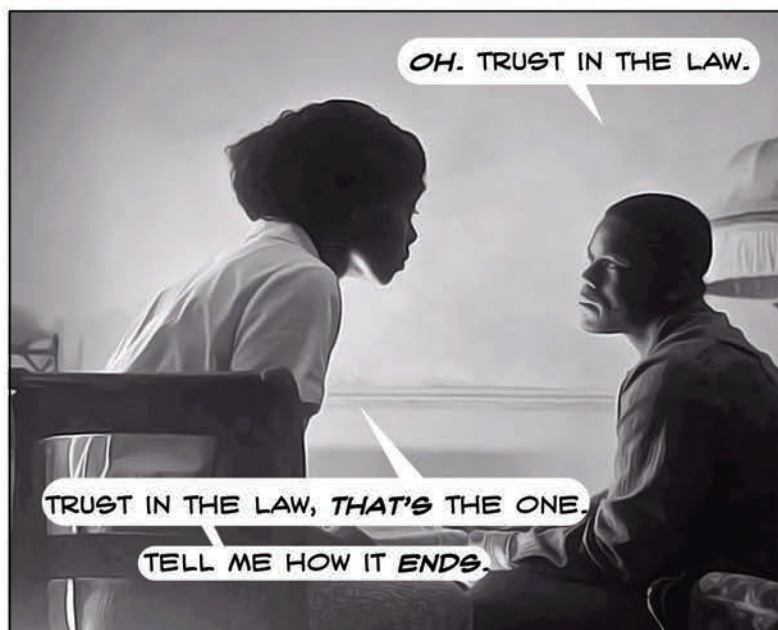
WHAT'S THE NAME OF THE PICTURE?

HUH?

STOP SAYING "HUH."



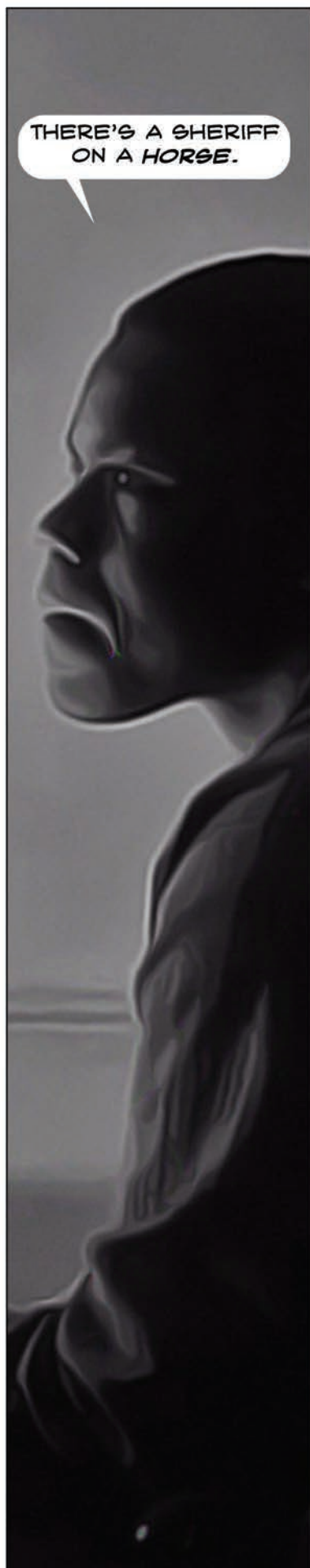
THE *MOVIE*, THE ONE YOU WATCHED  
OVER AND OVER WHEN YOU WERE A *BOY*.  
YOU USED TO TELL ME ABOUT IT *ALL* THE TIME



OH. TRUST IN THE LAW.

TRUST IN THE LAW, *THAT'S* THE ONE.

TELL ME HOW IT *ENDS*.



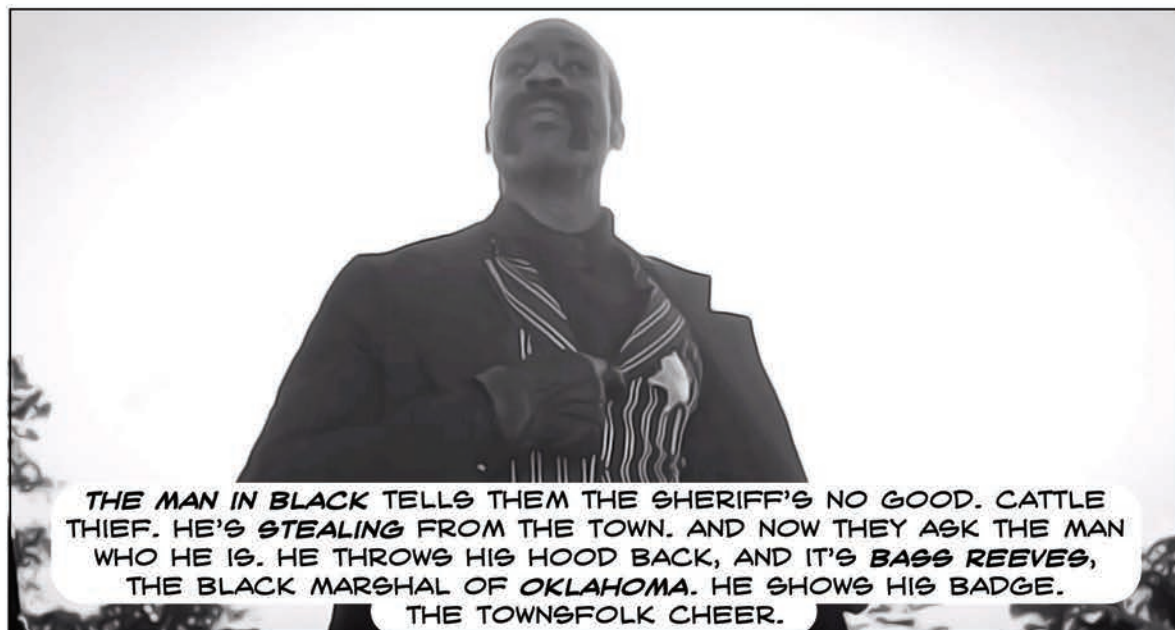
THERE'S A SHERIFF  
ON A HORSE.



HE'S SHOOTING AT **SOMEBODY** RIDING AFTER HIM. IT'S A MAN ALL IN BLACK, A MAN **IN A HOOD**. AND HE'S GOT A LASSO, AND HE THROWS IT AT THE SHERIFF. PULLS THE SHERIFF **RIGHT OFF** HIS HORSE.



AND THEY'RE IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH NOW, AND **DOORS BURST** OPEN AND ALL THE **TOWNSFOLK** COME RUNNING OUT TO SEE **WHAT'S** GOING ON.



**THE MAN IN BLACK** TELLS THEM THE SHERIFF'S NO GOOD. CATTLE THIEF. HE'S **STEALING** FROM THE TOWN. AND NOW THEY ASK THE MAN WHO HE IS. HE THROWS HIS HOOD BACK, AND IT'S **BASS REEVES**, THE BLACK MARSHAL OF **OKLAHOMA**. HE SHOWS HIS BADGE. THE TOWNSFOLK CHEER.





THEY *CHEER* FOR HIM,  
HUH?

YEAH.



AND THEY START  
*SHOUTING* FOR  
HIM TO STRING  
UP THE SHERIFF,  
BUT *BASS REEVES*  
WON'T HAVE IT.

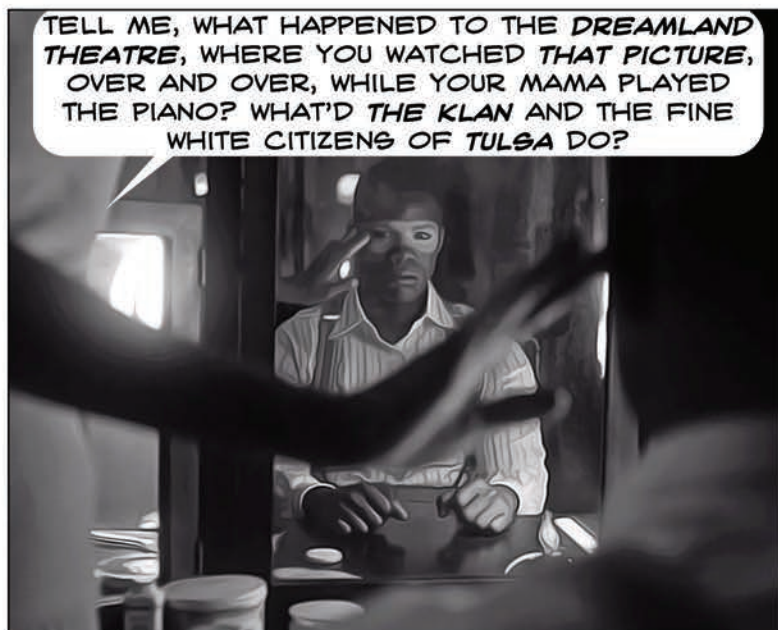


"THERE WILL BE  
NO MOB JUSTICE  
TODAY.  
TRUST IN THE LAW."



WHAT *COLOR* WERE THOSE TOWNSFOLK?

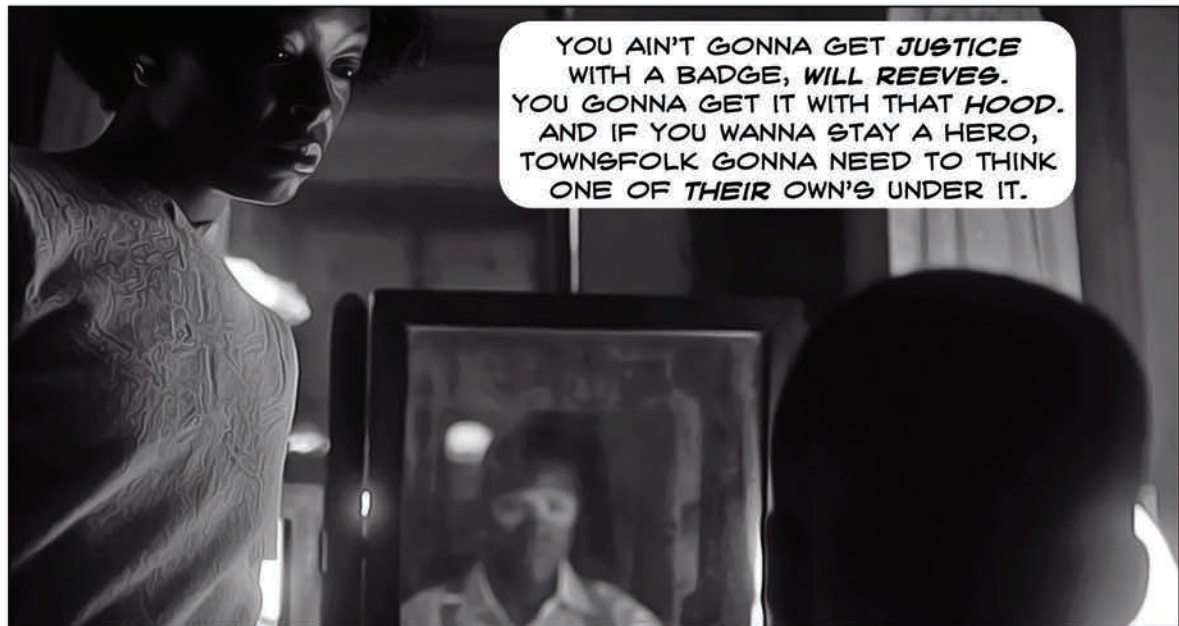
WHITE.



TELL ME, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE *DREAMLAND THEATRE*, WHERE YOU WATCHED *THAT PICTURE*,  
OVER AND OVER, WHILE YOUR MAMA PLAYED  
THE PIANO? WHAT'D *THE KLAN* AND THE FINE  
WHITE CITIZENS OF *TULSA* DO?



THEY *BURNED* IT DOWN.



YOU AIN'T GONNA GET *JUSTICE*  
WITH A BADGE, *WILL REEVES*.  
YOU GONNA GET IT WITH THAT *HOOD*.  
AND IF YOU WANNA STAY A HERO,  
TOWNSFOLK GONNA NEED TO THINK  
ONE OF *THEIR OWN'S* UNDER IT.

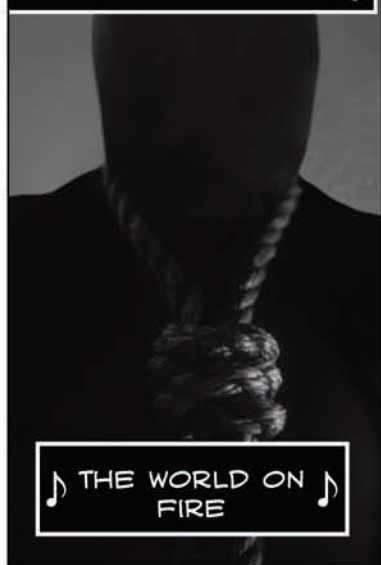


YOU *SURE*  
YOU WANNA DO THIS?

I'M *SURE*.



I DON'T WANT TO SET



THE WORLD ON  
FIRE



I JUST WANT  
TO START...

I'M GONNA START  
WITH THAT BASTARD,  
*FRED.*



TURNS OUT,  
HE OWNS A  
MARKET  
IN *QUEENS.*



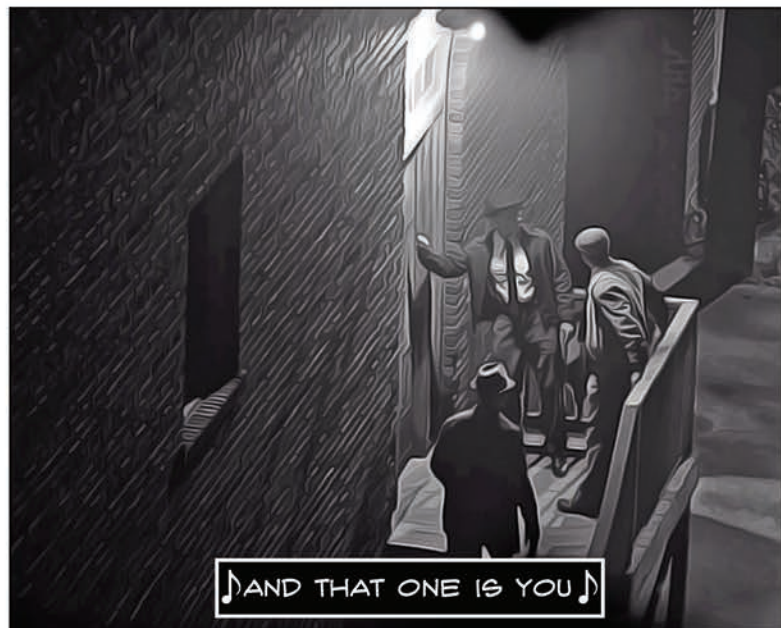
THEY WANTED ME TO *STAY AWAY* FROM HIM FOR  
A REASON.

I THINK IT'S GOT SOMETHING TO DO WITH WHAT  
*LIEUTENANT BATTLE* SAID TO ME AT  
THE *GRADUATION.*



BEWARE OF  
THE *CYCLOPS.*

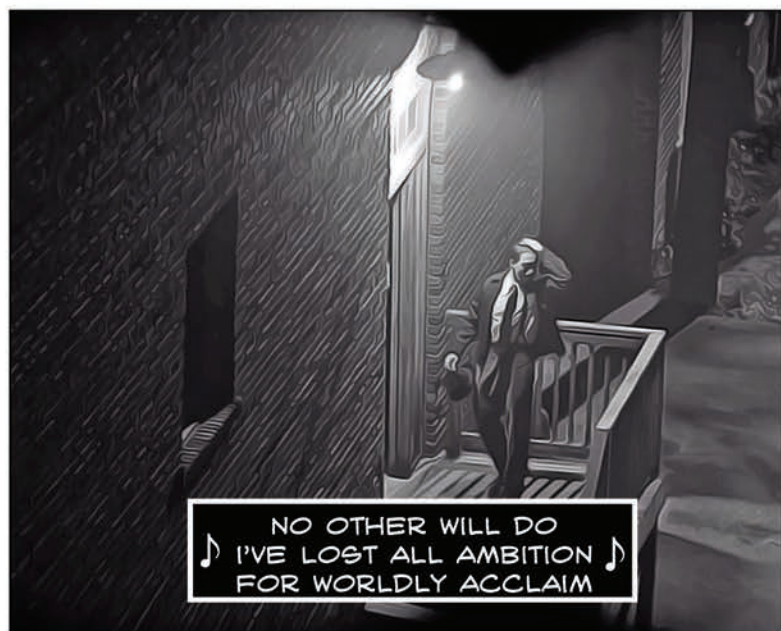




♪AND THAT ONE IS YOU♪



BEWARE OF  
THE *CYCLOPS*.



NO OTHER WILL DO  
♪I'VE LOST ALL AMBITION♪  
FOR WORLDLY ACCLAIM



♪I JUST WANT TO BE  
THE ONE YOU LOVE♪

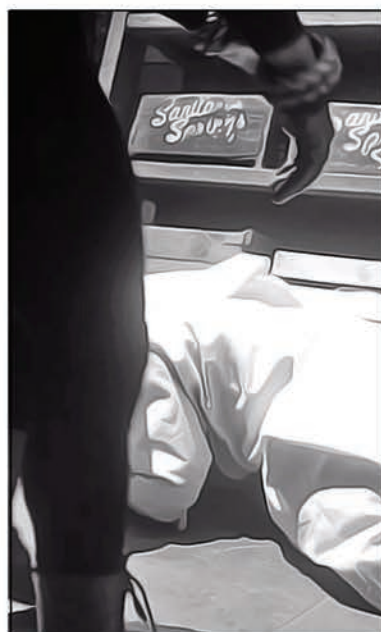


♪AND WITH YOUR ADMISSION  
THAT YOU FEEL THE SAME♪



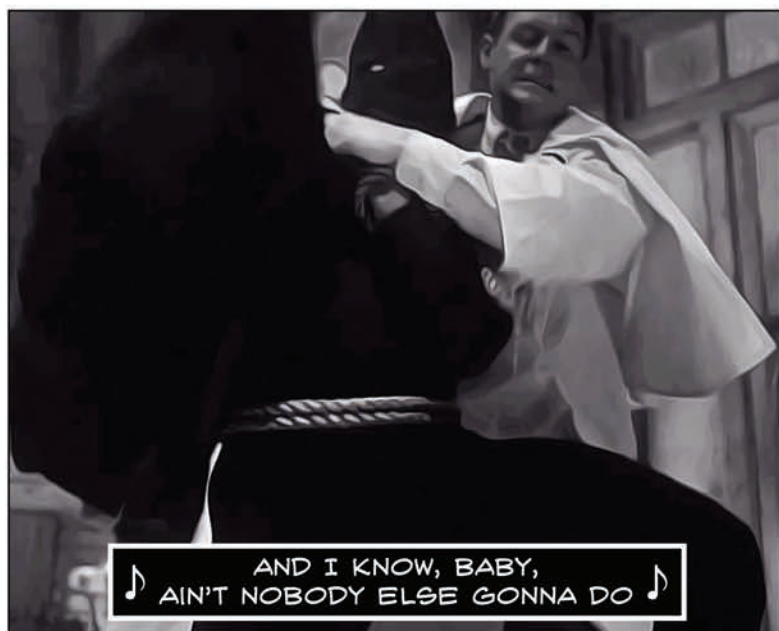
I'LL HAVE REACHED  
THE GOAL I'M  
DREAMING OF







♪ AND THAT ONE  
DESIRE IS YOU ♪

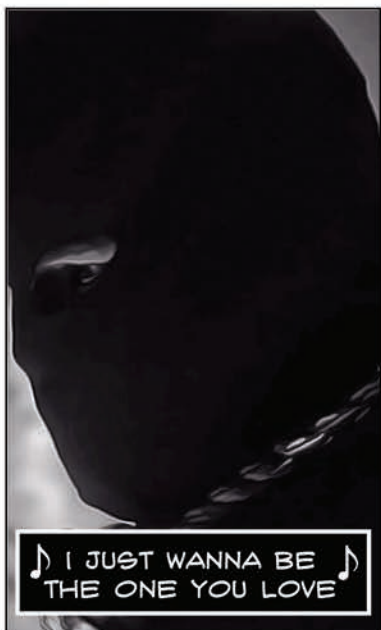


♪ AND I KNOW, BABY,  
AIN'T NOBODY ELSE GONNA DO ♪

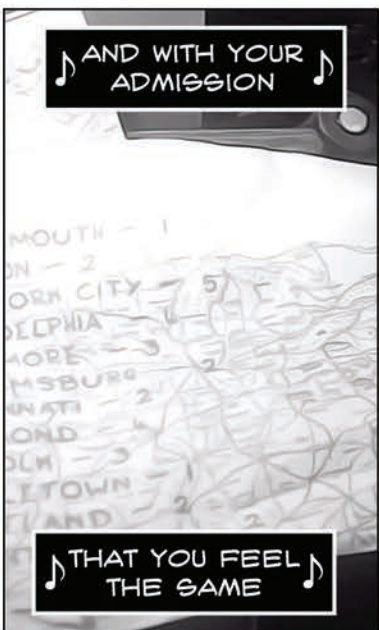


♪ I'VE LOST ALL  
AMBITION ♪

♪ OR WORLDLY DESIRE ♪



♪ I JUST WANNA BE  
THE ONE YOU LOVE ♪



♪ AND WITH YOUR  
ADMISSION ♪

♪ THAT YOU FEEL  
THE SAME ♪



♪ I'LL HAVE REACHED  
THE GOAL I'M  
DREAMING OF ♪









WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE?





This extraordinary being had crashed in through the window of the supermarket while the robbery was in progress and attacked the man responsible with such intensity and savagery that those not disabled immediately were only too willing to drop their guns and surrender.

—Hollis Mason





Presented here are the excerpts from UNDER THE HOOD. In this next chapter Hollis Mason discusses the traumas of the 1950s and the emergence of the new super-heroes. Reprinted with permission of the author.

## V.

The Minutemen didn't get to usher in the 1950s with a Christmas celebration the way we'd ushered in the '40s, and perhaps that's appropriate. The decade following the disbanding of the group was cold and bleak, both for me in particular and for masked adventurers in general. Plus, it seemed to go on forever.

I think the worst thing was the belated realization of just how much a fad we'd always been, something to fill the dead columns of the newspapers right alongside the Hula Hoop and the Jitterbug. Ever since Sally Jupiter married her manager, his tireless, shrewd efforts as a publicist had been noticeably absent. He'd recognized that the day of the costumed hero was over — even though we hadn't — and he'd gotten out while the getting was good. Consequently, we found our exploits being reported less and less frequently. When they were reported, the tone was often derisive. I can remember a lot of hooded vigilante jokes coming into circulation during the early fifties. The mildest was one that suggested we were called The Minutemen due to our performance in the bedroom. There were an awful lot of bright blue gags about Sally Jupiter. I know, because she told me most of them herself the last time I saw her.

Sally had a baby girl named Laurel Jane in 1949, and it seemed to be right about then that her marital problems started. These were widely discussed, so I don't think I need repeat them here. Suffice it to say that the marriage ended in 1956, and since then Sally has done a first rate job of bringing her daughter up into a bright, spunky youngster that any mother could be proud of.

The thing about that particular decade is that things first started getting *serious* then. I remember thinking at the time that it was funny how the more serious things got, the better the Comedian seemed to do. Out of the whole bunch of us, he was the only one who was still right up there on the front pages, still making the occasional headline. On the strength of his military work he had good government connections, and it often seemed as if he was being groomed into some sort of patriotic symbol. At the height of the McCarthy era, nobody had any doubts about where the Comedian's feet were planted politically.

That was more than could be said for the rest of us. We all had to testify before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee, and were all forced to reveal our true identities to one of its representatives. Galling though this was, it didn't present any immediate problems for most of us. With Captain Metropolis having such an outstanding military record and with my own service in the police force, we both were more or less cleared of suspicion right away. Mothman met with more difficulty, mostly because of some left-wing friends he'd cultivated during his student days. He was eventually cleared, but the investigations were both lengthy and ruthless, and I think that the pressure he was under at that time prompted the beginnings of the drinking problem that has contributed so much to his later mental ill-health.

Only Hooded Justice refused to testify, on the grounds that he was not prepared to reveal

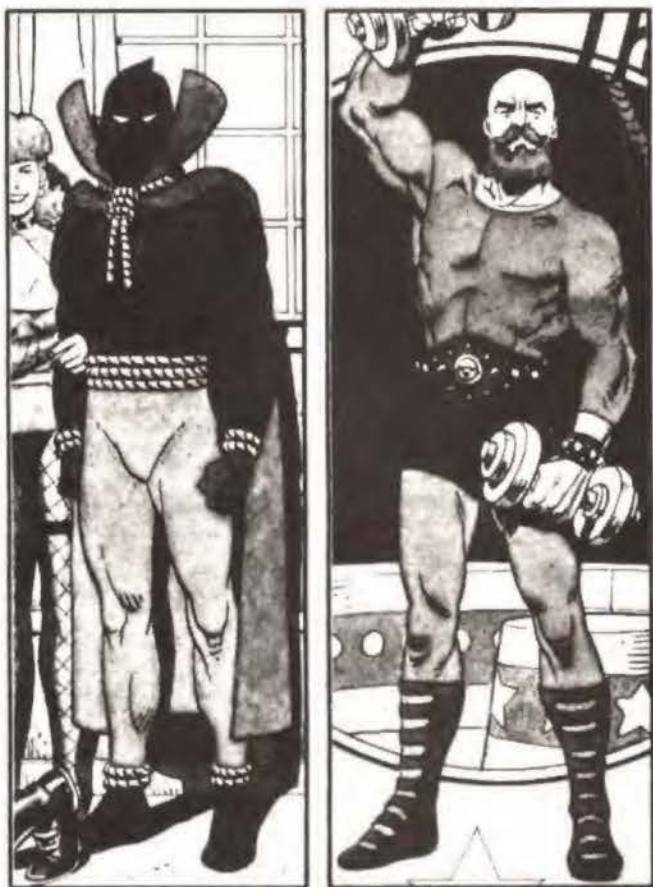


1947: Sally Jupiter marries Laurence Schexnayder. Can you spot the famous faces in the crowd?



his true identity to anyone. When pressed, he simply vanished...or at least that's how it seemed. Vanishing is no big problem when you're a costumed hero — you just take your costume off. It seemed quite likely that Hooded Justice had simply chosen to retire rather than reveal his identity, which the authorities seemed perfectly happy with.

The only detail concerning the disappearance of America's first masked adventurer that still nags at me was trivial, and maybe not even connected at all; it was brought up in an article that appeared in *The New Frontiersman*, almost a year after Hooded Justice vanished. The author mentioned the disappearance of a well known circus strongman of the day named Rolf Müller, who had quit his job at the height of the Senate Subcommittee hearings. Three months later, a badly decomposed body that was tentatively identified as Müller's was pulled from the sea after being washed up on the coast of Boston. Müller, assuming the



(left) Hooded Justice (right) Rolf Müller.  
*Were they the same man?*

body actually was that of the renowned weightlifter, had been shot through the head. The inference of the article was that Müller, whose family was East German, had gone on the run for fear of being uncovered while the Communist witch hunts were at their most feverish. The piece also implied that Müller had probably been executed by his own Red superiors.

I always wondered about that. Müller disappeared at almost exactly the same time as Hooded Justice was last seen, and the two men had corresponding builds. Whether the body washed up on that Boston shoreline belonged to Müller or not, neither he nor Hooded Justice were ever seen or heard from again. Were they the same man? If they were, were they really dead? If they were dead, who killed them? Was Hooded Justice really working for the Reds? I don't know. Real life is messy, inconsistent, and it's seldom when anything ever really gets resolved. It's taken me a long time to realize that.

One of the big problems that faced costumed heroes at the time was the absence of costumed criminals of any real note. I don't think any of us realized how much we needed those goons until they started to thin out. You see, if you're the only one who'd bothered to turn up for a free-for-all in costume, you tended to look kind of stupid. If the bad guys joined in as well, it wasn't so bad, but without them it was always sort of embarrassing. There had never been as many costumed criminals as heroes, but with the end of the 1940s the trend grew much more pronounced.

Most of the crooks turned in their costumes along with their criminal careers, but some just opted for a less extroverted and more profitable approach. The new breed of villains, despite their often colorful names, were mostly ordinary men in business suits who ran drug and prostitution rackets. That's not to say they didn't cause as much trouble...far from it; I



just mean that they weren't as much fun to fight. All the cases I ended up investigating during the '50s seemed sordid and depressing and quite often blood-chillingly horrible. I don't know what it was... there just seemed to be a sort of bleak, uneasy feeling in the air. It was as if some essential element of our lives, of all our lives, was vanishing before we knew entirely what it was. I don't think I could really describe it completely except maybe to somebody who remembered the terrific elation we all felt after the war: we felt that we'd taken the worst that the 20th century could throw at us and stood our ground. We felt as if we'd really won a hard-earned age of peace and prosperity that would see us well into the year 2000. This optimism lasted all through the '40s and the early '50s, but by the middle of that latter decade it was starting to wear thin, and there was a sort of ominous feeling in the air.

Partly it was the beatniks, the jazz musicians and the poets openly condemning American values whenever they opened their mouths. Partly it was Elvis Presley and the whole Rock 'n' Roll boom. Had we fought a war for our country so that our daughters could scream and swoon over young men who looked like *this*, who sounded like *that*? With all these sudden social upheavals just when we thought we'd gotten everything straight, it was impossible to live through the 1950s without a sense of impending catastrophe bearing implacably down upon the whole country, the whole world. Some people thought it was war and others thought it was flying saucers, but those things weren't really what was bearing down upon us. What was bearing down upon us was the 1960s.

The '60s, along with the mini-skirt and the Beatles, brought one thing to the world that was significant above all others — its name was Dr. Manhattan. The arrival of Dr. Manhattan would make the terms "masked hero" and "costumed adventurer" as obsolete as the persons they described. A new phrase had entered the American language, just as a new and almost terrifying concept had entered its consciousness. It was the dawn of the Super-Hero.

Manhattan's existence was announced to the world in the March of 1960, and I don't think there can have been anybody on the planet who didn't feel that same strange jumble of emotions when they heard the news. Foremost amongst this assortment of sensations was disbelief. The idea of a being who could walk through walls, move from one place to another without covering the intervening distance and re-arrange things completely with a single thought was flat-out impossible. On the other hand, the people presenting this news to us were our own government. The notion that they might simply have made it up was equally improbable, and in the face of this contradiction, it became gradually easier to accept the dream-like unreality of those first newsreel images: a blue man melting a tank with a wave of his hand; the fragments of a disassembled rifle floating there eerily in the air with nobody touching them. Once accepted as reality, however, such things became no easier to digest. If you accept that floating rifle parts are real you also have to somehow accept that everything you've ever known to be a fact is probably untrue. That peculiar unease is something that most of us have learned to live with over the years, but it's still there.

The other emotions that accompanied the announcement were perhaps harder to identify and pin down. There was a certain elation... it felt as if Santa Claus had suddenly turned out to be real after all. Coupled with and complementary to this was a terrible and uneven sense of fear and uncertainty. While this was hard to define precisely, if I had to boil it down into three words, those words would be, "We've been replaced." I'm not just talking about the non-powered costumed hero fraternity here, you understand, although Dr. Manhattan's appearance was certainly one of the factors that led to my own increased feelings of obsolescence and my eventual decision to quit the hero business altogether. You see, while masked vigilantes had certainly been made obsolete, so in a sense had every other living organism upon the planet. I don't think that society has fully realized yet just exactly what Dr. Manhattan's arrival means; how much it's likely to change every detail of our lives.

Although Dr. Manhattan was the most prominent by far of the 'New Breed' of costumed heroes, he wasn't quite the first nor by any means the last. In the closing months of 1958, the papers mentioned that a major opium and heroin smuggling racket had been busted by a



young adventurer named Ozymandias, who seemed to have quickly gained a reputation amongst the criminal fraternity for his boundless and implacable intelligence, not to mention a large degree of athletic prowess.

I met both Dr. Manhattan and Ozymandias for the first time at a charity event in the June of 1960. Ozymandias seemed to be a nice young fellow, although I personally found Dr. Manhattan to be a little distant. Maybe that was more my fault than his, though, since I found it very difficult to feel easy around the guy, even once I'd got used to the shock of his physical presence. It's a strange feeling...the first time you meet him your brain wants to scream, blow a fuse and shut itself down immediately, refusing to accept that he exists. This lasts for a couple of minutes, at which time he's still there and hasn't gone away, and in the end you just accept him because he's standing there and talking to you and after a while it almost seems normal.

Almost.

Anyway, at that charity event...I think it was Red Cross relief for the ongoing famine in India...a lot of things became apparent to me. Looking around at the other adventurers there, I wasn't happy with what I saw: The Comedian was there, imposing his overbearing personality and his obnoxious cigar smoke upon anyone within reach. Mothman was there, a glass in one hand, slurring his words and letting his sentences trail off into incoherence. Captain Metropolis was there, his paunch starting to show despite a strict regimen of Canadian Air Force Exercises. Finally, leaving the two younger heroes aside for a moment, there was me: Forty-six years old and starting to feel it, still trying to cut it in the company of guys who could level a mountain by snapping their fingers. I think it was when that moment of self insight hit me that I first decided to finally hang up my mask and get myself a proper job. I'd been about due to retire from the police force for some time, and I started wondering about what I wanted to do now that the thrill of adventure had finally started to pale. Looking back over my life, I tried to work out what I'd been doing during my existence's happier stretches, in order to form a basis for my future contentment.

After much deliberation, I concluded that I'd never been happier than when helping my dad beat some sense into an obstinate engine down at Moe Vernon's yard. After a life of crime-fighting, no notion seemed sweeter to me than that of spending my autumn years contentedly making dead vehicles run again in the confines of my own auto repair shop.

In the May of this year, 1962, that's exactly what I opted to do.

I retired. To mend cars. Probably for the rest of my life. As I see it, part of the art of being a hero is knowing when you don't need to be one anymore, realizing that the game has changed and that the stakes are different and that there isn't necessarily a place for you in this strange new pantheon of extraordinary people. The world has moved on, and I'm content to watch it from my armchair with a beer by my side and the smell of fresh oil still on my fingers.

Part of my contentment comes from knowing that there have maybe been some overall consequence of my twenty-three years behind the mask. This knowledge came to me in the shape of a letter from a young man whose name I'm not at liberty to reveal. He told me of his great admiration for my efforts as Nite Owl and proposed that since I'd retired and would no longer be using the name, perhaps he could borrow it since he intended to follow my example and become a crime-fighter. I've visited his home since then and seen some of the fabulous technology he intends to bring to bear on the war against crime. I was certainly far too impressed to refuse him the use of what I'd always thought was a dumb name to begin with, so by the time this sees print there may well be a new Nite Owl patrolling the streets of New York. Also, Sally Jupiter tells me that as soon as little Laurie's old enough she wants to be a super-heroine just like her mom, so who knows? It seems as if from being a novelty nine-day wonder, the super-hero has become a part of American life. It's here to stay.

For better, or for worse.



**QUIS CUSTODIET  
IPSOS CUSTODES.**

Who watches the watchmen?

— Juvenal, *Satires*, VI, 347

Quotes as the epigraph of the Tower  
Commission Report, 1987

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