

STEPHEN KING THE STAND

Captain Trips



AGUIRRE-SACASA

PERKINS

MARTIN

STEPHEN KING THE STAND

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1. STAND VOL. 1: CAPTAIN TRIPS. Contains material originally published in magazine form as THE STAND: CAPTAIN TRIPS #1-5. First printing 2009. Hardcover ISBN# 978-0-7851-3620-0. Softcover ISBN# 978-0-7851-3521-0. Published by MARVEL PUBLISHING, INC., a subsidiary of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT, INC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 417 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10016. © 2008 and 2009 Stephen King. All rights reserved. Hardcover: \$24.99 per copy in the U.S. (GST #R127032852). Softcover: \$19.99 per copy in the U.S. (GST #R127032852). Canadian Agreement #40668537. All characters featured in this publication and the distinctive names and likenesses thereof, and all other indicia are trademarks of Stephen King. Published by arrangement with The Doubleday Broadway Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc. This publication is produced under license from The Doubleday Broadway Publishing Group and Stephen King. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this book with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. Printed in Canada ALAN FINE, CEO Marvel Toys & Publishing Divisions and CMO Marvel Characters, Inc.; JIM SOKOLOWSKI, Chief Operating Officer; DAVO GABRIEL, SVP of Publishing Sales & Circulation; ED BOGART, SVP of Business Affairs & Talent Management; MICHAEL PASCIULLO, VP Merchandising & Communications; JIM O'KEEFE, VP of Operations & Logistics; OAN CARR, Executive Director of Publishing Technology; JUSTIN BRIE, Director of Publishing & Editorial Operations; SUSAN CRESPI, Editorial Operations Manager; ALEX MORALES, Publishing Operations Manager; STAN LEE, Chairman Emeritus. For information regarding advertising in Marvel Comics or on Marvel.com, please contact Mitch Dane, Advertising Director, at mdane@marvel.com. For Marvel subscription inquiries, please call 800-217-9158.

STEPHEN KING THE STAND



Captain Trips

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

Chuck Verrill, Marsha DeFillipo, , Brian Stark,
Jim Nausedas, Jim McCann, Arune Singh, Chris Allo, & Jeff Suter

This volume is dedicated to my Dad for his encouragement
of my dreams and his belief in my potential.

FOR ALBERT JESSE PERKINS

December 22 1925 - November 7 2008

- MP

For more information on THE STAND comics, visit marvel.com/comics/the_stand
To find Marvel Comics at a local comic shop, call 1-888-COMICBOOK

They're all around us—and then they're inside us: Bubonic plague, AIDS, Avian Influenza, SARS. Diseases that devour us from the inside. It's terrifying enough to be stalked by vampires, werewolves or other demonic entities. But to have a microscopic organism actually inside your body, invading your very cells with no hope of a cure, that's the more horrifying fate by far.

And it is to this subject of pandemics that Stephen King brings his awesome literary talents, crafting a work of such scope and significance that decades after its initial publication, *The Stand* is still ranked as a favorite among legions of Constant Readers. Why? Ultimately, I believe it goes beyond the superb narrative or revealing characterizations. What keeps this book a perennial best seller is the awful realization that Captain Trips could exist! We know from history that the Black Plague wiped out one-third of the population of medieval Europe. We know from experience that garden variety influenza can be potentially lethal if we don't treat it. These "bugs" aren't the stuff of a horror writer's imagination; they're as real as your next sniffle or cough. And Stephen King has turned that very legitimate fear into a contemporary masterpiece. It's an apocalyptic vision brought to you by a secret government program gone frighteningly wrong.

Captain Trips is no naturally occurring strain of pathogen, it's a man-made monstrosity—and it's gotten out! Here King has tapped into another of our great fears: That we'll bring about our own destruction. In our frantic attempts to protect ourselves as a nation, we have unknowingly unleashed something that could eradicate humanity.

Irony aside, that's a nightmare scenario. And that's exactly what the entire novel is: A possible, perhaps probable scenario that could happen at any time. Terrorists or a lax government facility such as Project Blue could unleash such a plague on us. Even absent the supernatural element of Randall Flagg, the Walkin' Dude, *The Stand* chills its readers to the bone with the foreboding sense that this fate could be as near as your next handshake. The five issues gathered herein will introduce you to an unforgettable cast of characters who will be your guide through this bleak, charnel house landscape. Some will measure up to the demands Armageddon will place on the survivors, and some won't. Yet all their struggles are, in the last analysis, our own. And when the surface elements are cast aside, that's what great, meaningful literature is all about.

Stay healthy
Ralph Macchio

chapter
ONE



PROLOGUE.
THE CIRCLE OPENS.

Sally, Wake up now, Sally.

...lemme... lemme alone...

Wake up! You *got* to wake up!

CALIFORNIA. SOMEWHERE IN THE DESERT.
CHARLIE AND SALLY CAMPION.

...what is it, Charlie, what's wrong?

You got to get dressed, honey! You got to get Baby LaVon, and we got to get outta here!

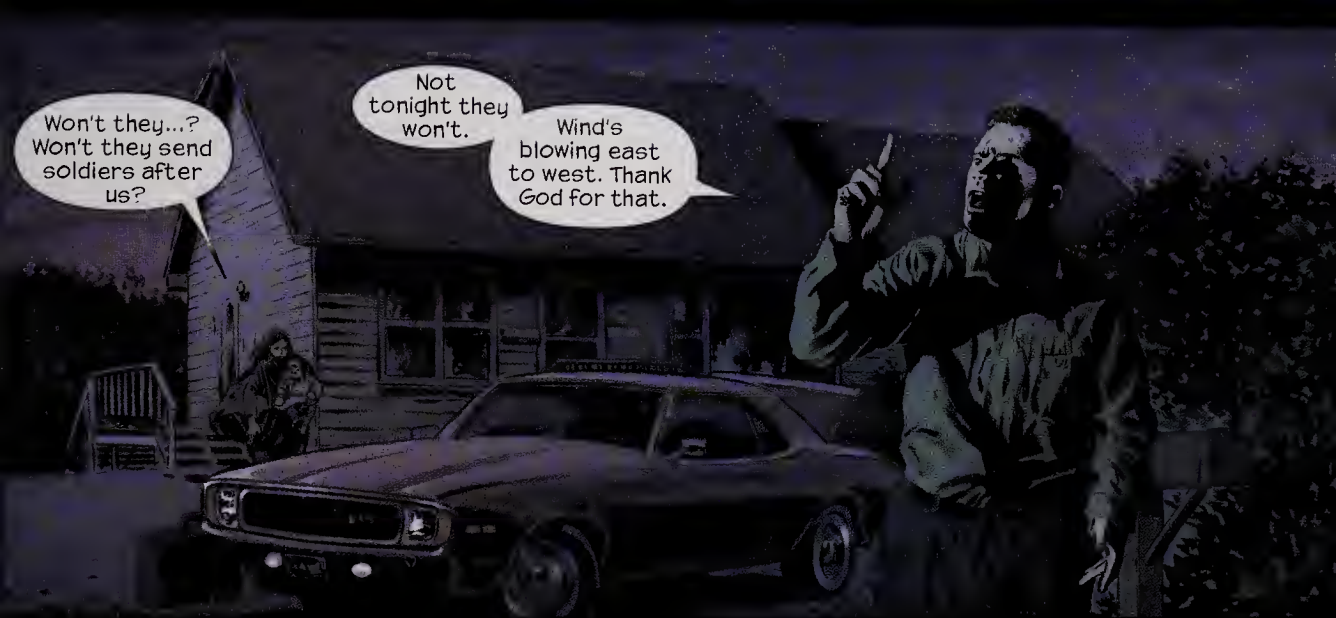
Why, is it...? Was there a fire?

Sally, honey, *don't* ask questions--you just get Baby LaVon dressed so we can hurry up and *go--*

I got to test the wind, see how much time we got--

Sally Campion knew what leaving in the middle of the night meant.

AWOL. Charlie was going AWOL and taking her and LaVon with him.



Won't they...?
Won't they send
soldiers after
us?

Not
tonight they
won't.

Wind's
blowing east
to west. Thank
God for that.

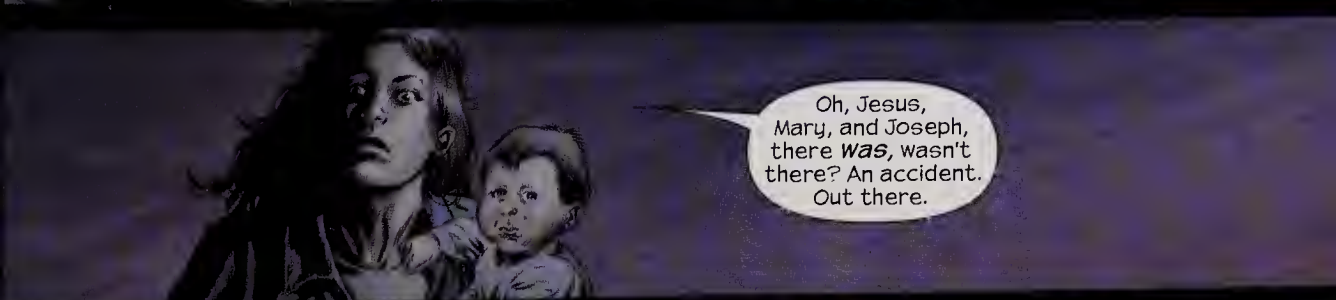


~cough~

~cough~



Was there an
accident?



Oh, Jesus,
Mary, and Joseph,
there *was*, wasn't
there? An accident.
Out there.



I was playing
solitaire. I looked
up and saw the clock
had gone from green
to red. I turned on
the monitor. Sally,
they're all...

...D-E-A-D
down there.

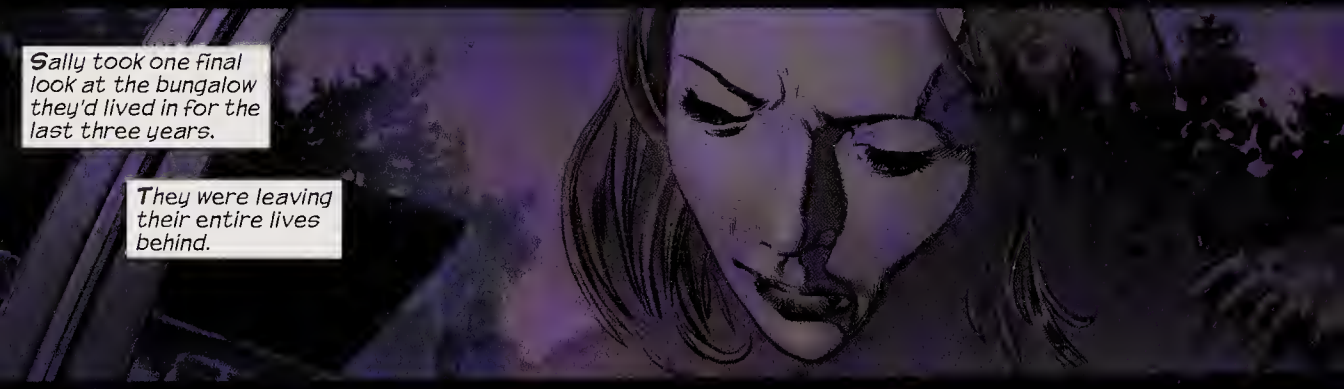


What was it exactly?

I dunno, I don't *want* to know, but it kil...
K-I-L-L-E-D them quick.

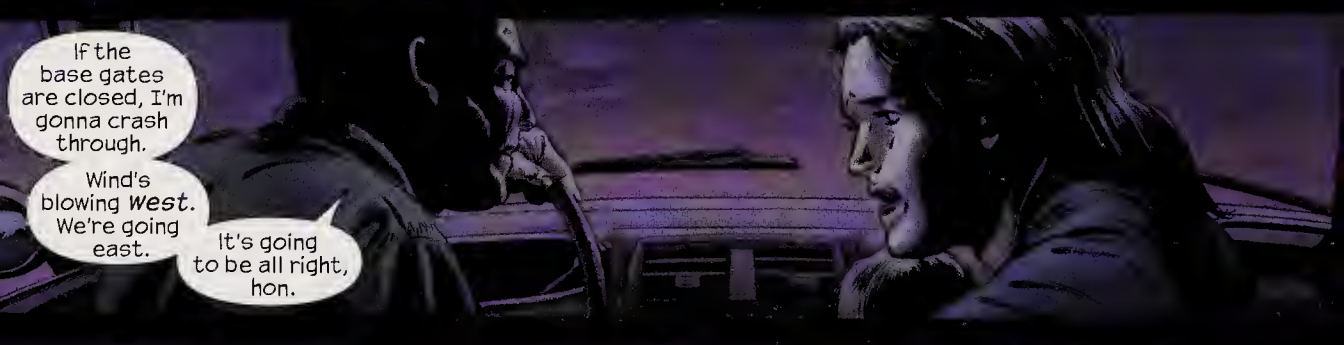


If I'd looked up even thirty seconds later, I'd be shut up in that tower control room right now, like a bug in a bottle...



Sally took one final look at the bungalow they'd lived in for the last three years.

They were leaving their entire lives behind.



If the base gates are closed, I'm gonna crash through.

Wind's blowing *west*. We're going east.

It's going to be all right, hon.

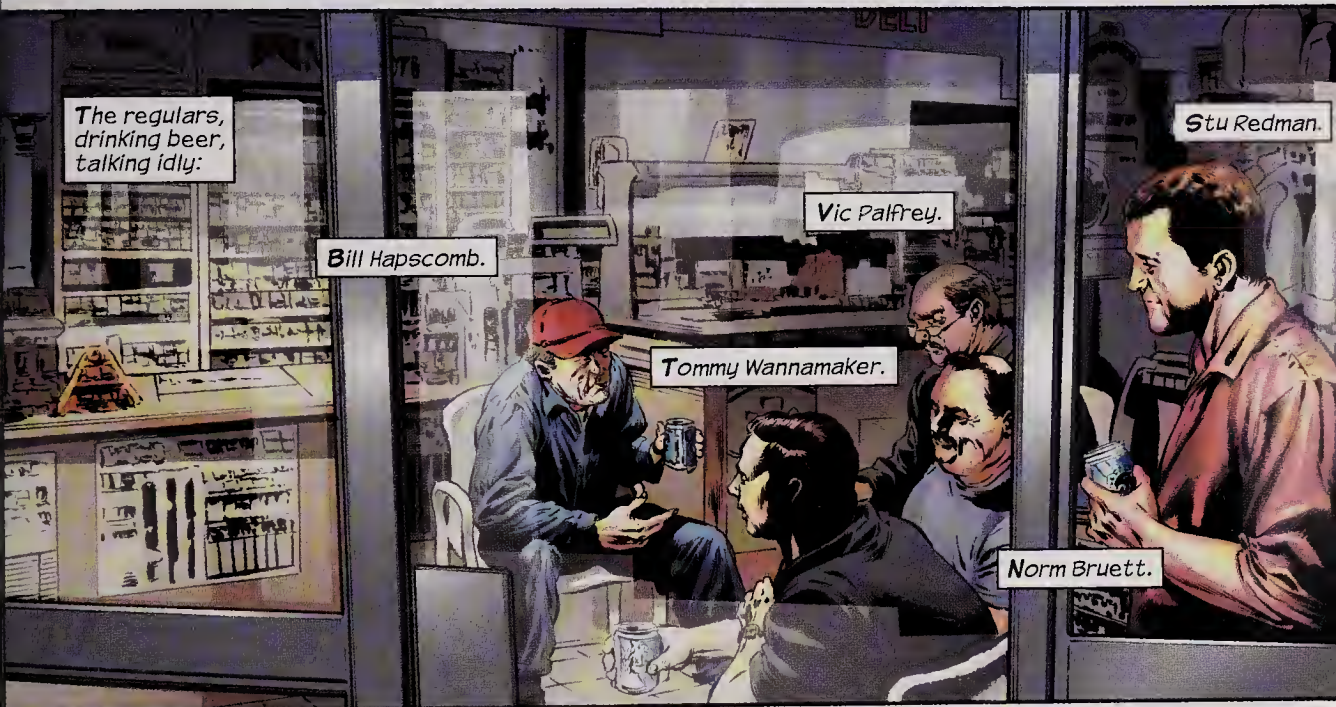


By dawn, they would be riding east across Nevada, and Charlie would be coughing steadily.

END PROLOGUE.

ARNETTE, TEXAS.

BILL HAPSCOMB'S
TEXACO STATION
ON ROUTE 93.



The regulars,
drinking beer,
talking idly:

Bill Hapscomb.

Vic Palfrey.

Tommy Wannamaker.

Stu Redman.

Norm Bruett.



What I say is this:
They gotta **screw**
this inflation crap...
Screw this national
debt crap...



We got
the presses
and we got
the paper...

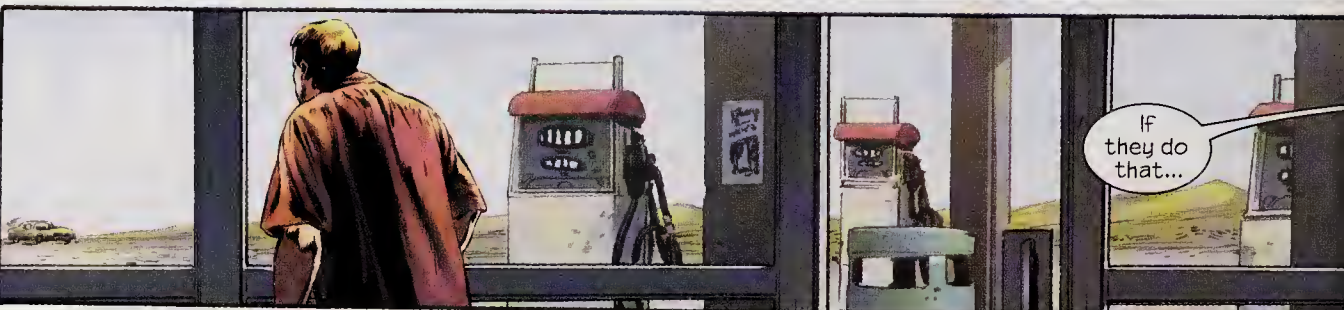


We gotta run
off fifty-million
thousand dollar
bills and **pump**
'em into
circulation...

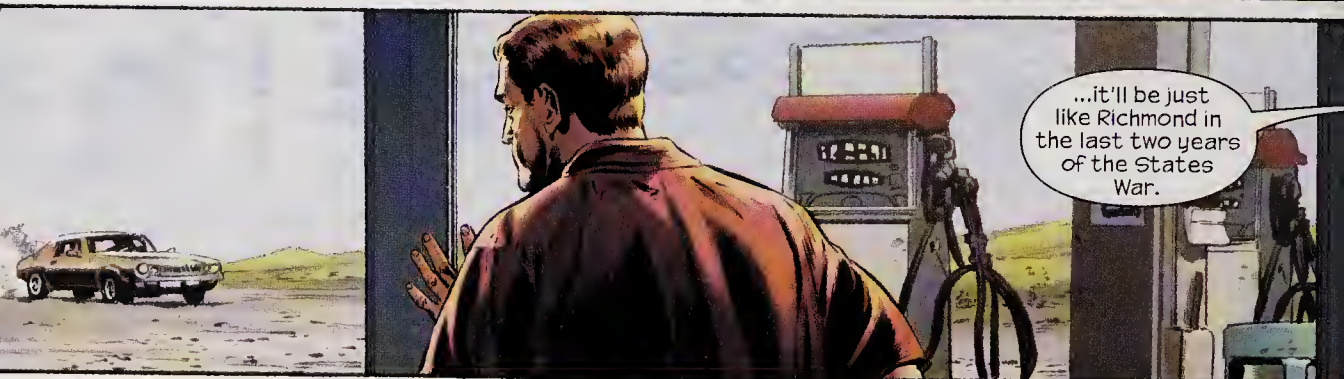


That wouldn't get us nowhere...

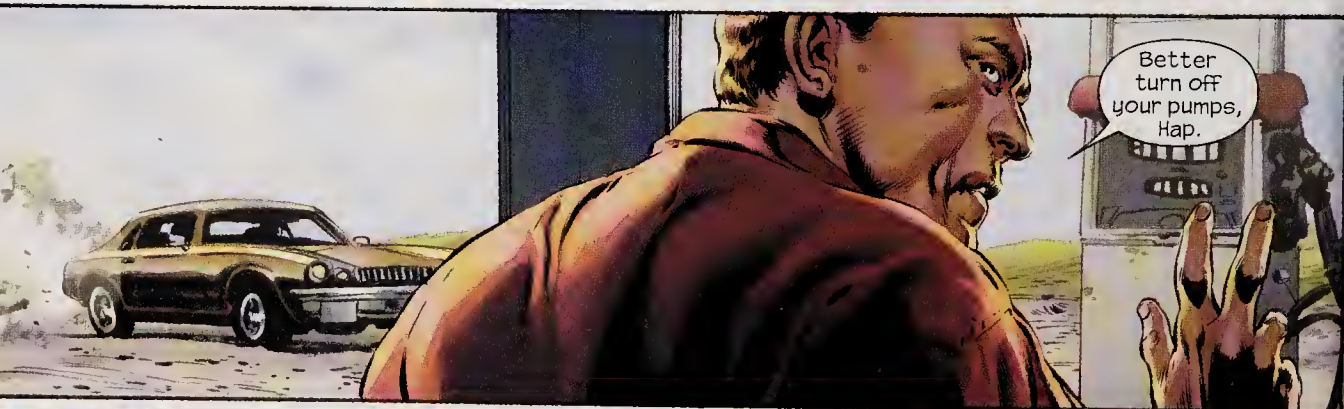
That's right, Hap. Vic's right.



If they do that...



...it'll be just like Richmond in the last two years of the States War.



Better turn off your pumps, Hap.



The pumps?

Christ on a pony! It's coming right at us--

Since it was Stuart Redman, arguably the **quietest** man in Arnette, who flicked off all eight gas switches--

--saving his life, by the way, and the lives of his friends--

--he was the only one who **didn't** see the Chevy as it hit the pumps, shearing them off.

Holy moly! Will they--will they blow, Hap?

If it was gonna happen, it already woulda--

It's slowing down-- stopping--

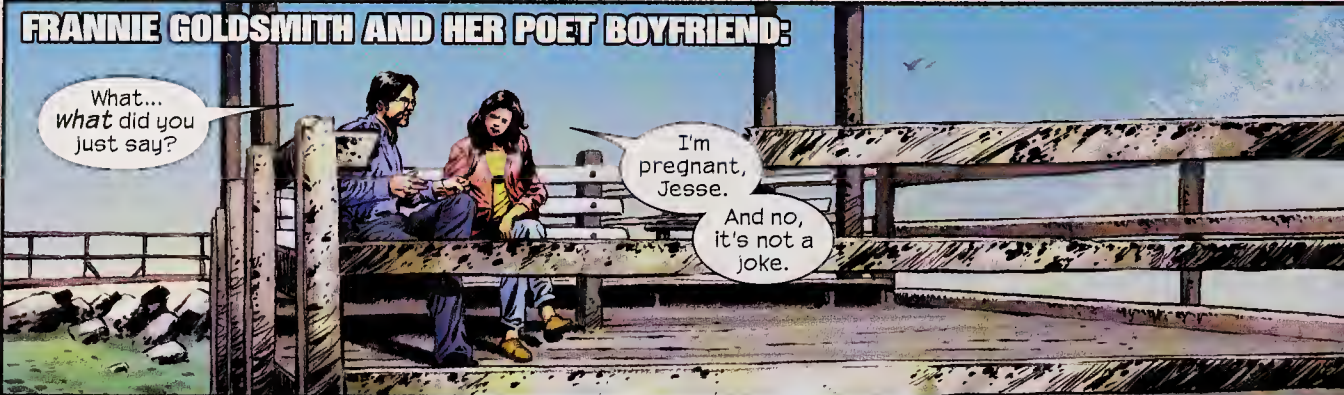
They could smell the gas and hear the clock-like tick of the Chevy's cooling engine--

Holy moly! If he'd been doing sixty, we'd all be **dead** now.

OGUNQUIT, MAINE.
THE COLD ATLANTIC OCEAN.



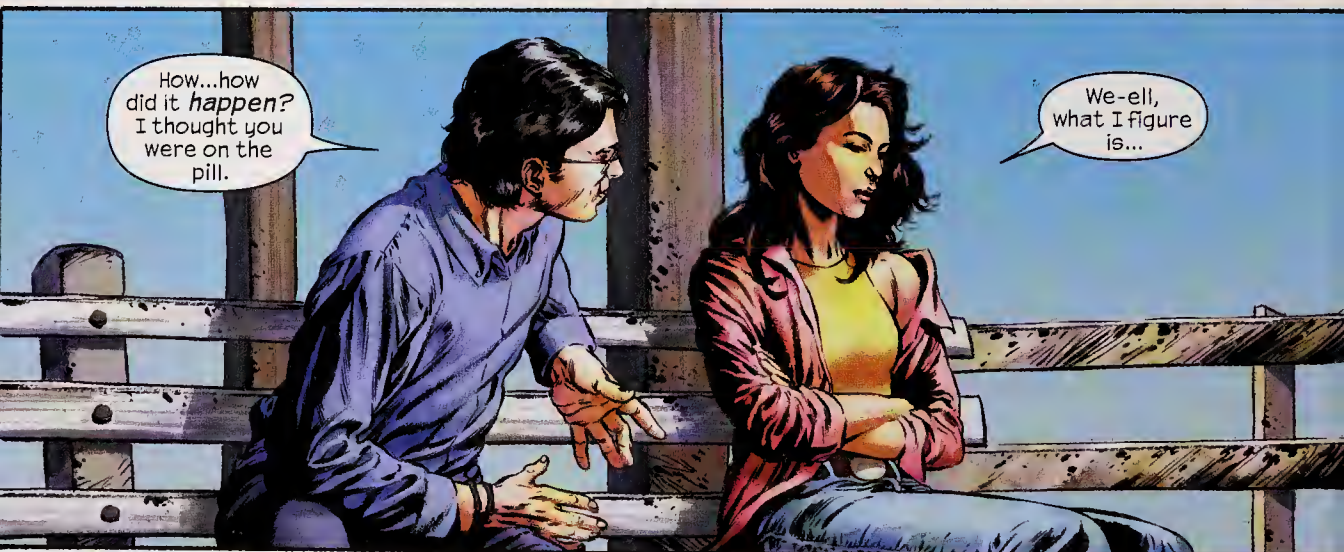
FRANNIE GOLDSMITH AND HER POET BOYFRIEND:



What...
what did you
just say?

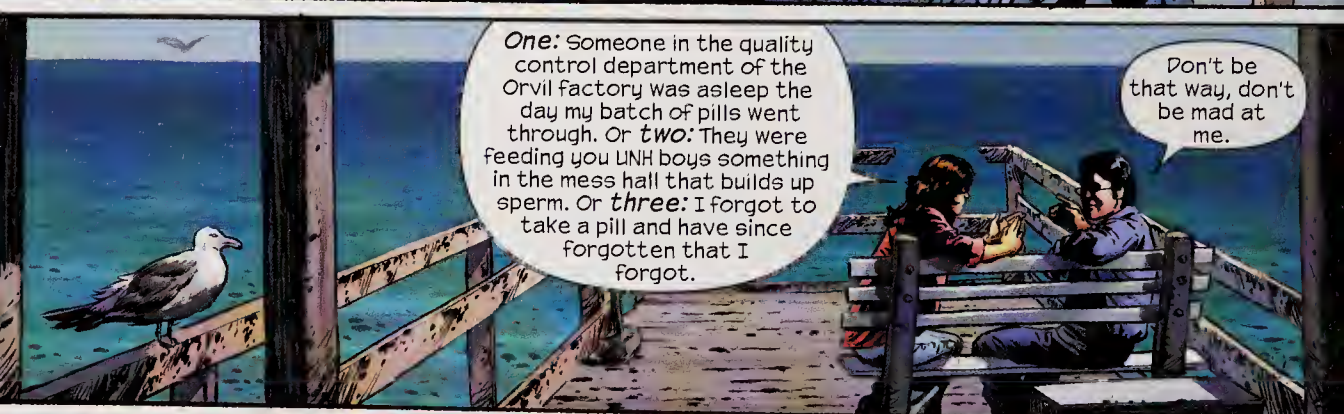
I'm
pregnant,
Jesse.

And no,
it's not a
joke.



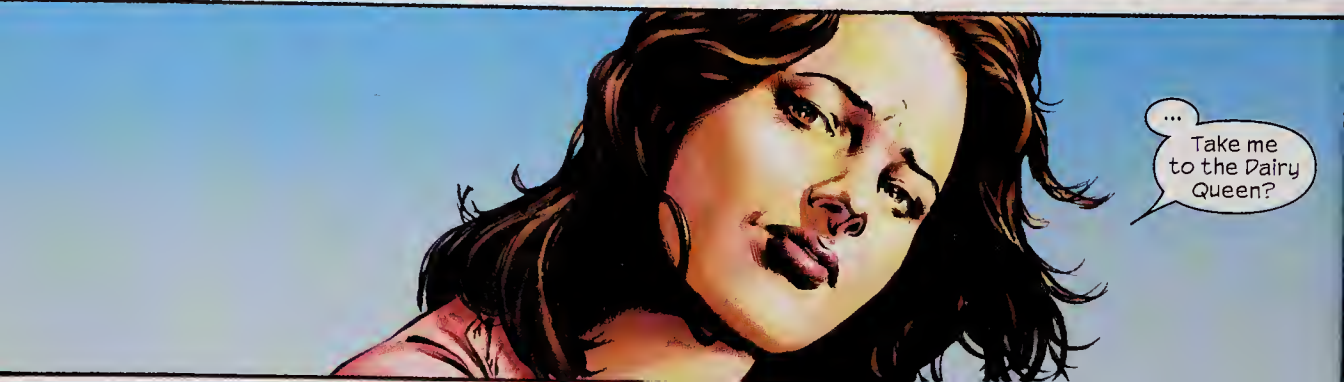
How...how
did it *happen*?
I thought you
were on the
pill.

We-ell,
what I figure
is...

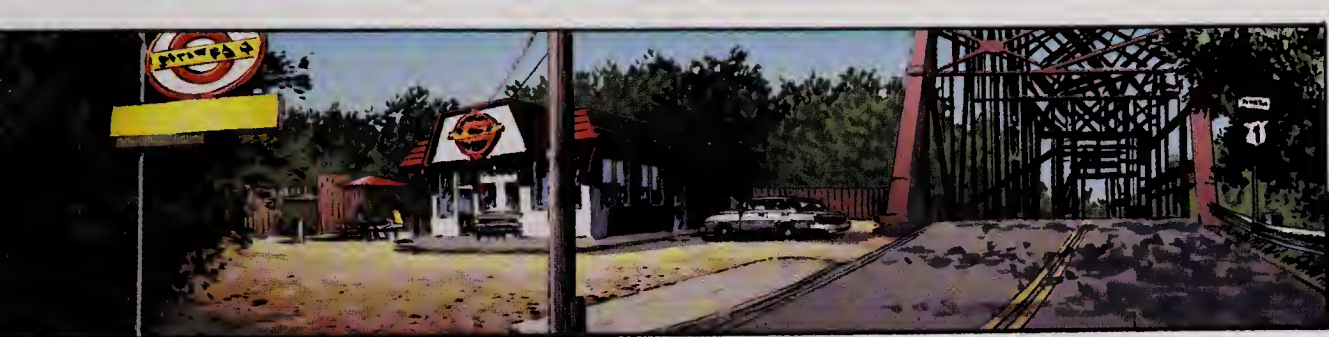


One: Someone in the quality control department of the Orvil factory was asleep the day my batch of pills went through. Or *two:* They were feeding you UNH boys something in the mess hall that builds up sperm. Or *three:* I forgot to take a pill and have since forgotten that I forgot.

Don't be
that way, don't
be mad at
me.



...
Take me
to the Dairy
Queen?



ARNETTE. THE TEXACO STATION.

Help--

Someone
get his legs--

God-damn--

It was the *smell* issuing
from the car that made Norm
Bruett turn away and start
heaving. The *sick* stench of
blood, fecal matter, vomit,
and human decay.

I got 'im,
Hap--

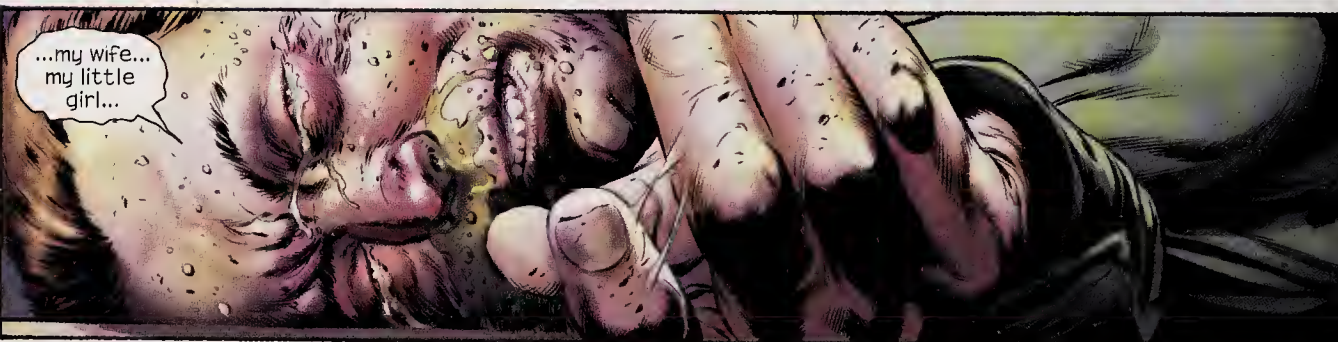
The office,
Tommy, let's
get 'im
inside--

Stu Redman had
been in the war--

--but he'd never
seen anything so
terribly pitiful as
this.

Going by the flies,
the young woman
and baby had been
dead for awhile.





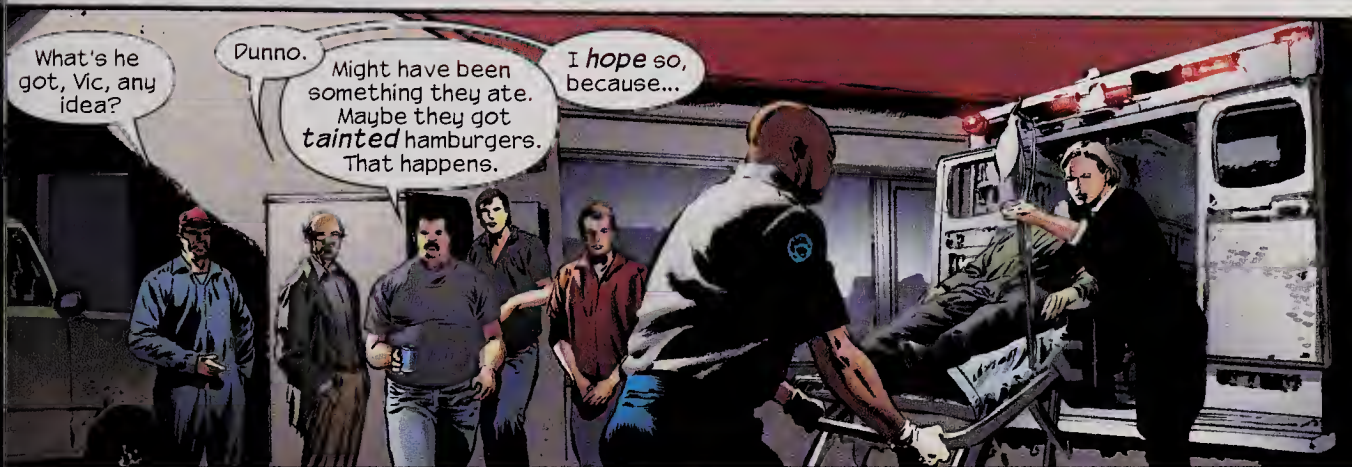


...didn't get away quick enough...

...are Sally and baby LaVon...?

They're fine, they're all right.

Just-- take it easy, okay?



What's he got, Vic, any idea?

Dunno.

Might have been something they ate. Maybe they got *tainted* hamburgers. That happens.

I *hope* so, because...



'Cause why?

Stu could've answered Tommy, but he waited for Vic to say it.

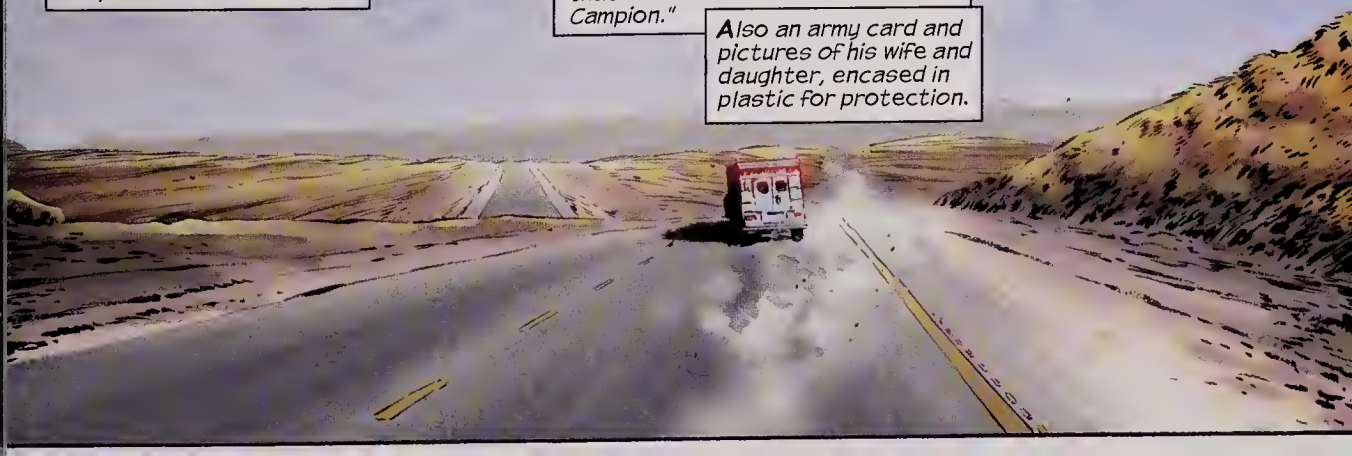


Because otherwise...it might be something catching.

The man from the Chevy died twenty miles from the hospital in Braintree.

In his wallet, there were seventeen dollars cash and a driver's license that identified him as "Charles D. Campion."

Also an army card and pictures of his wife and daughter, encased in plastic for protection.



**BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.
LARRY UNDERWOOD,
SITTING IN HIS CAR...**



...watching a rat
take bites out of
a dead cat.



Dear New York:
I've come home.



Five days ago, he'd been
in sunny Southern California,
home of hopheads, religious
freaks, and Disneyland.

(Maybe the Yankees
are in town. That
would make this trip
worthwhile.)

For Larry, it had all started
eighteen months ago, when
he recorded a demo of one
of his songs, "Baby, Can You
Dig Your Man?"

The session lasted
three days. It was
a good one.



Then, nine weeks ago, out
of the blue, Columbia had
called, saying they wanted
to release "Baby, Can You
Dig Your Man?" as a single.

Larry signed a stinker
of a contract and got
a check for 500
dollars.

Two weeks later, Larry
was reading, in Billboard
magazine, that his song
was one of three hot
prospects for the week.



Five weeks ago, the single had cracked Billboard's Hot One Hundred.

Larry found this out at a lunch with some real biggies from Columbia, who gave him another--much larger--check.

No one at the table had seemed to care that he'd been drunk.

Not long after that, the week spring came to Los Angeles, Larry heard "Baby, Can You Dig Your Man?" on the radio for the first time.

He was holding a bag of Toll House cookies, walking out of his kitchen.



I KNOW, I DIDN'T SAY I WAS COMING DOWN...

I KNOW YOU DIDN'T KNOW I WAS HERE IN TOWN...

BUT BAY-YAY-YABY YOU CAN TELL ME IF ANYONE CAN...

BABY, CAN YOU DIG YOUR MAN?

HE'S A RIGHTEOUS MAN...

TELL ME, BABY, CAN YOU DIG YOUR MAN?

Two weeks ago, the single hit number forty-seven, and the party had begun in earnest.

Larry rented a beach house in Malibu.

And then, after that, things got a bit hazy...

People wandered in and out of the house, always more of them, mostly strangers.

He remembered snorting coke and chasing it with tequila.

He remembered a girl who had bum-tripped and gone screaming down the bone-white beach, as naked as a nuthatch.



He remembered...

Six days ago, June 13, Wayne Stuckey sitting him down on the beach in front of his party house, saying:

You have to pull the plug, Larry.

The booze, the dope, the whoring.

The party's got to end.

If I pull the plug...I'm gonna look like the asshole of the world.

Yeah, they'll call you names, but they're not your friends. Your friends saw what was happening and split the scene three days ago. Every last one of them but me.

Stuckey was the closest thing Larry had to a brother. And he made sense.

Go back to your house and pull the plug, Larry. Then you get in your car and you go. Just go, man. And stay away until you're right in the head.

So that's what Larry Underwood had done. Driven across the country and come home, to New York. And was now sitting in his car, drifting in and out of sleep, wondering if he dreamed the rat eating the--

TAP
TAP
TAP

Mom...

I knew that was you, from the window. Come on up and I'll make you breakfast.

After eggs, bacon,
toast, juice, and
coffee.



So
you came
back.



I guess...
I got to
missing you,
Mom.



Oh? Is *that* why you wrote
me so often? 'Cause you
missed me so much?



I--I'm
not much
of a letter
writer...



I hear that song you got on the radio.

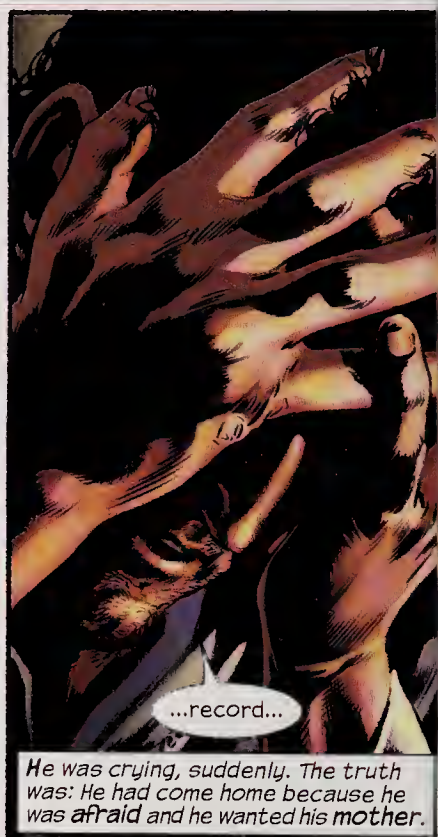
I tell people, that's my son. That's Larry. Most of them don't believe it.



I get a royalty. A certain percent of every...



...of every...



...record...

He was crying, suddenly. The truth was: He had come home because he was afraid and he wanted his mother.



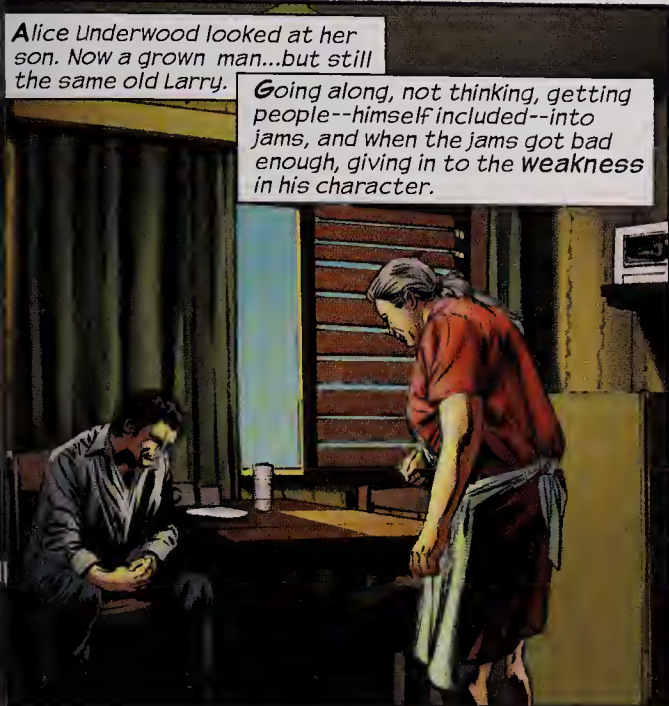
Larry...

...do you want to stay here, son?

The rollaway's still in the back bedroom.

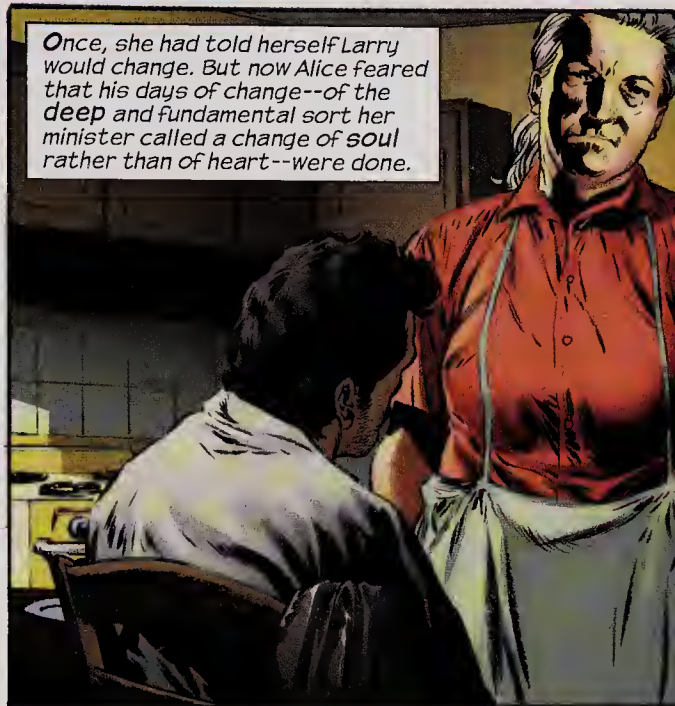


Could I...? Would you mind?

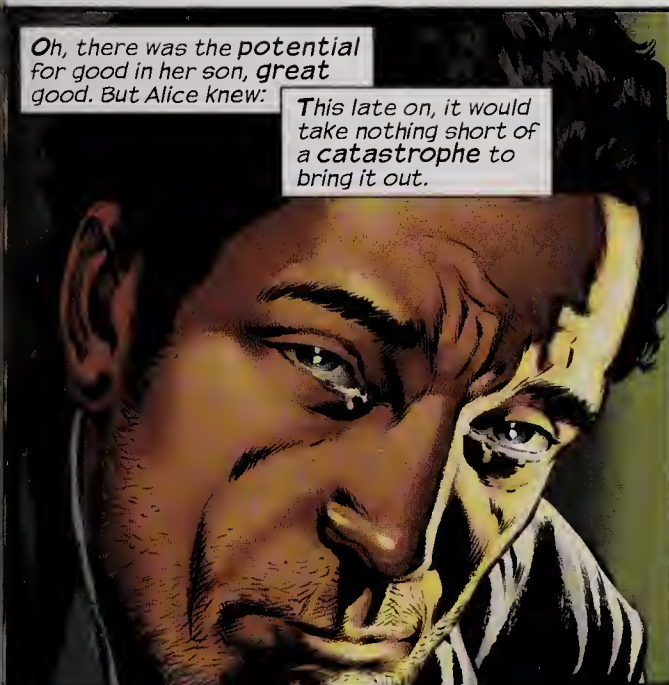


Alice Underwood looked at her son. Now a grown man...but still the same old Larry.

Going along, not thinking, getting people--himself included--into jams, and when the jams got bad enough, giving in to the weakness in his character.



Once, she had told herself Larry would change. But now Alice feared that his days of change--of the deep and fundamental sort her minister called a change of soul rather than of heart--were done.



Oh, there was the potential for good in her son, great good. But Alice knew:

This late on, it would take nothing short of a catastrophe to bring it out.



You're tired. I'll make up the bed and then you can sleep.



Larry tried to remember the last time he had cried in front of his mother...

He was still trying, later, when he fell asleep for eighteen hours...

ARNETTE. NORM BRUETT'S HOUSE THE NEXT DAY.

You kids shutcha heads!

Bobby and Luke Bruett:

Yes, Daddy!

Yes, Daddy!

With no sign of their mother Lila anywhere.

Norm felt tired and had a queasy, thumping headache...

Like he was hungover, but he'd only had three beers at Hap's before Campion arrived in his Chevy...

A hit song came over the cracked Philco radio by the stove--

BUT BAY-YAY-YABY
YOU CAN TELL ME IF
ANYONE CAN...

BABY, CAN
YOU DIG YOUR
MAN?

HE'S A
RIGHTEOUS
MAN...

Norm turned it off before it could split his head--

CLICKK!

NORM.

And found the note Lila had left for him sitting next to it--

She was out babysitting
for Ralph Hodges' wife.

Ralph's three kids.

For a dollar.

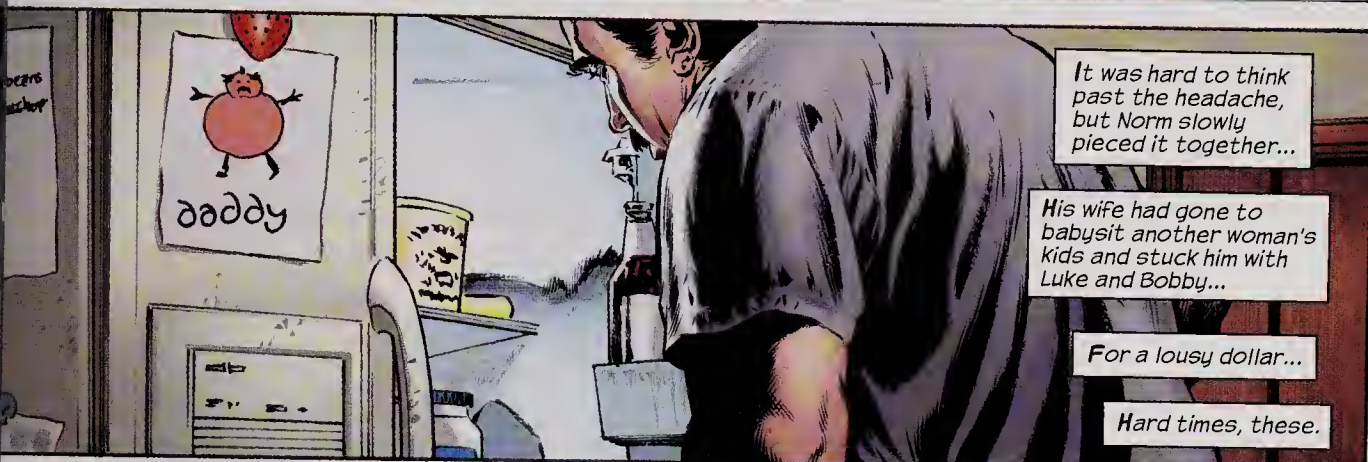


It was hard to think
past the headache,
but Norm slowly
pieced it together...

His wife had gone to
babysit another woman's
kids and stuck him with
Luke and Bobby...

For a lousy dollar...

Hard times, these.



He was trying to
decide if he was
hungry or not when
it came out of him.
A big, wet--

CHOO!



So he was sick, too.
On top of everything
else.

Coming down with
a summer cold.



It never occurred to Norm
to think of the phlegm that
had been running out of
Charlie Campion's nose
and mouth.

Not until much later,
once his boys started
sneezing, too.

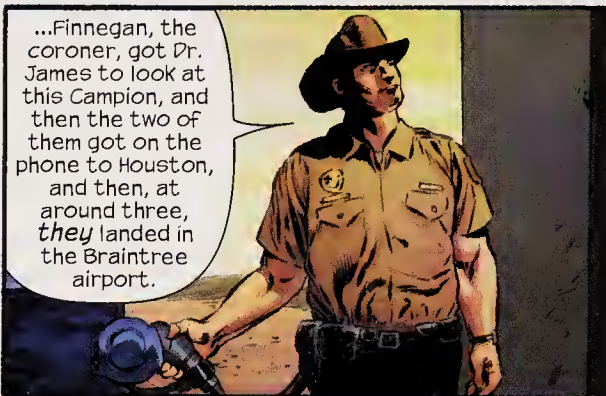


STATE PATROLMAN JOE BOB BRENTWOOD,
FILLING UP AT HIS COUSIN'S TEXACO STATION.

AND FILLING THE REGULARS IN.



...Finnegan, the
coroner, got Dr.
James to look at
this Campion, and
then the two of
them got on the
phone to Houston,
and then, at
around three,
they landed in
the Braintree
airport.

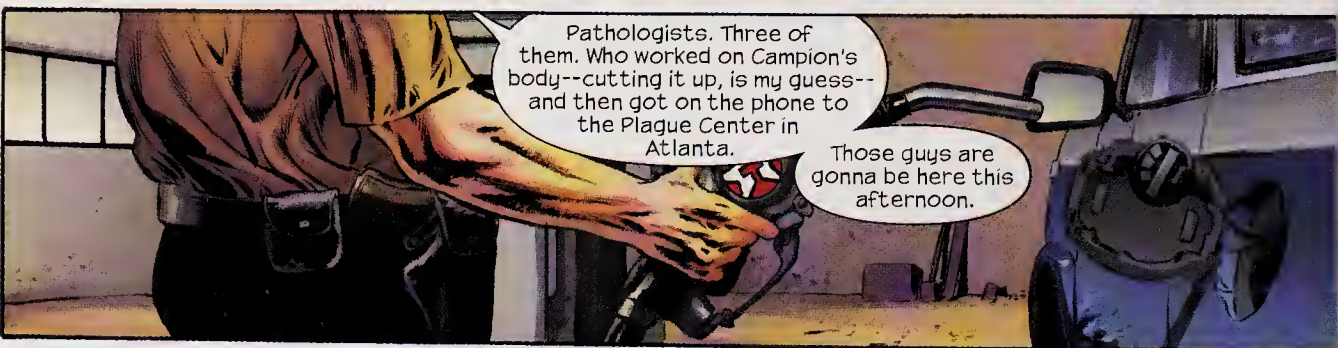


They
who?



Pathologists. Three of
them. Who worked on Campion's
body--cutting it up, is my guess--
and then got on the phone to
the Plague Center in
Atlanta.

Those guys are
gonna be here this
afternoon.



The Plague
Center's federal. They
wouldn't send out a
planeload of federal
men even if it were...
hell, I don't know,
cholera.



A heavy silence fell
over the men.



Stu watched Hap take
a handkerchief out of his
pocket and wipe his nose
with it.

Anyway, I thought you guys had a right to know. From all I heard, you just tried to lend a hand...

It's appreciated, Joe Bob.

I'll get in touch with the others--Tommy, Norm--and tell 'em what you said.

Just keep my name out of it. I don't want to lose my job.

And your buddies don't need to know who *tipped* you off, do they?

No...

Say, that's five even for the gas, Joe Bob. I hate to charge you, but...

But...

Anhh...

--CHOO!

You want to watch that. Nothing worse than a summer cold.

That's the truth.

Yeah, but maybe it *ain't* a cold...

I woke up this morning sneezin' and hackin' away. Had a mean headache, too.

I took some asprin and it's gone down some, but I'm still full of snot.

Hap stared at Vic, scared. Then admitted:

Norm Bruett has a cold, too. That's why he ain't here, he's home with his boys, sick as a dog.

Maybe we're all coming down with it. What that Campion had. What he died of.

For the first time in a long while, Stu spoke:

You know, Hap...

...it might not be such a bad idea to close the station.

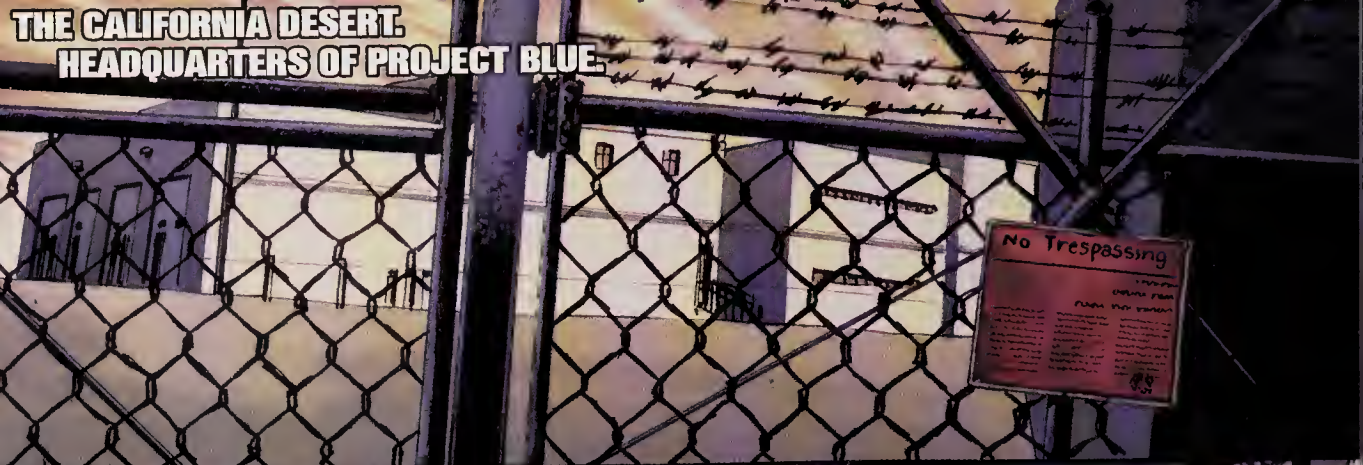
"Just for today..."



chapter
TWO



THE CALIFORNIA DESERT: HEADQUARTERS OF PROJECT BLUE



GENERAL BILL STARKEY:

Who began his career in the military thirty-six years ago as a West Point plebe.

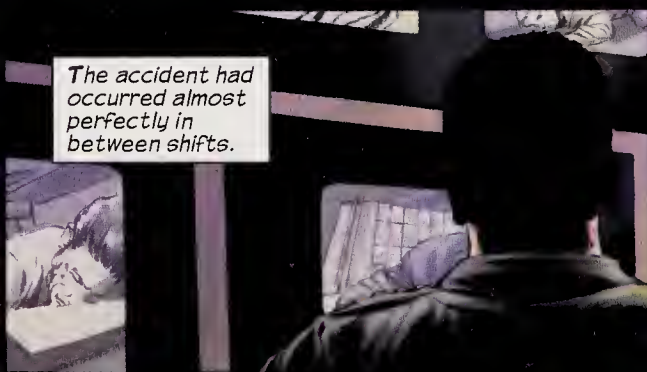
Who has won countless medals in service of his country.

Who has spoken to many presidents, and even offered some of them advice.

Who has been through dark times before, but this...



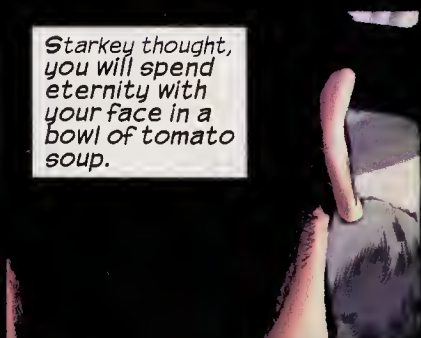
The accident had occurred almost perfectly in between shifts.



Project Blue's cafeteria had been only lightly populated.



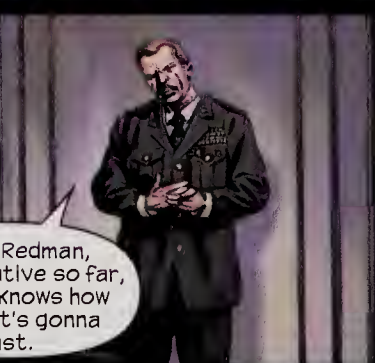
Starkey thought, you will spend eternity with your face in a bowl of tomato soup.




LEN GREIGHTON, STARKEY'S RIGHT-HAND:

Those men who handled Campion's body in Arnette have been through their prelims in Atlanta and...they all tested positive, except for one.

Stuart Redman, who's negative so far, but who knows how long that's gonna last.

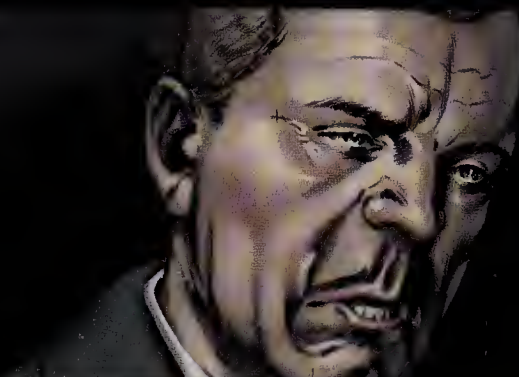




If only
Campion hadn't
run...


That was
sloppy security,
Len. Very
sloppy.

Go on.



Arnette's been
quarantined and we've
isolated at least sixteen
cases of constantly
shifting A-Prime flu
there...

On the plus
side, as far as the
media's concerned, they
believe this is an
anthrax situation.




Thank God
for that, at
least.

What else,
Len?

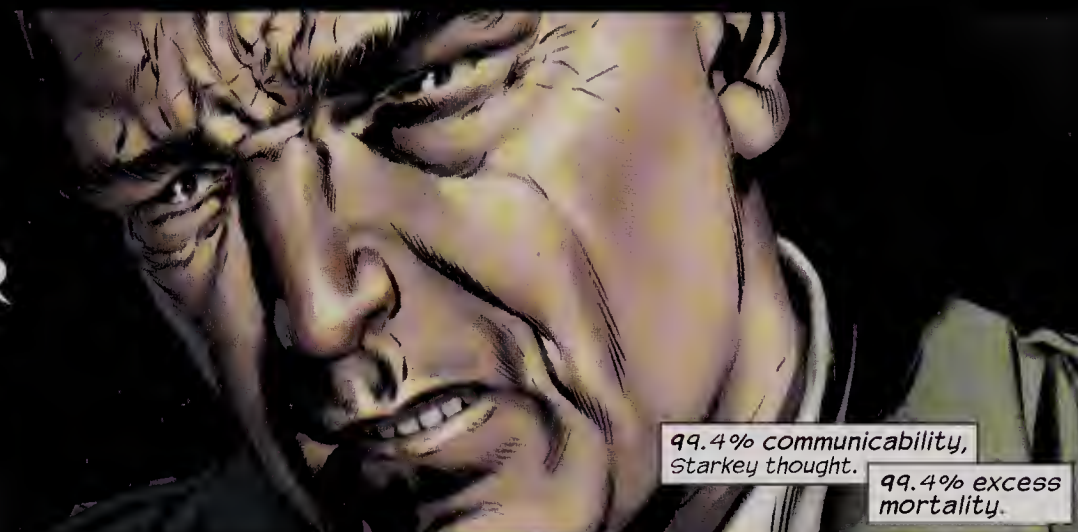
We...have a Texas highway
patrolman, Joseph Robert
Brentwood, whose cousin
owns the gas station
where Campion ended up.
He dropped by there
yesterday morning to tell
Hapscomb the health
department people
were coming.

*And was exposed
to A-Prime, Starkey
thought.*

We picked
him up three hours
ago, Billy, but in
the meantime,
he...



...he'd been
patrolling half
of East
Texas.



And God
knows how many
people he's been
in contact with.

Christ.

99.4% communicability,
Starkey thought.

99.4% excess
mortality.

INTERLUDE

On June 18, five hours after he had talked to his cousin Bill Hapscomb, Joe Bob Brentwood pulled Harry Trent, an insurance man, over for speeding on Highway 40.

While Brentwood wrote out the ticket, Trent jokingly tried to sell him a life insurance policy.

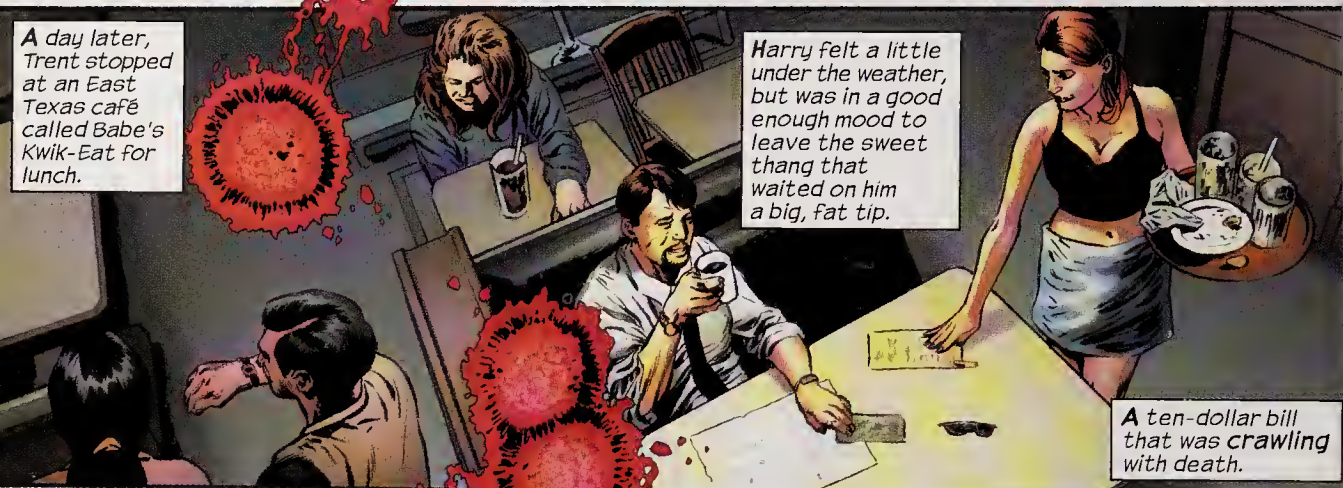
Dying was the last thing on Joe Bob's mind.



A day later, Trent stopped at an East Texas café called Babe's Kwik-Eat for lunch.

Harry felt a little under the weather, but was in a good enough mood to leave the sweet thang that waited on him a big, fat tip.

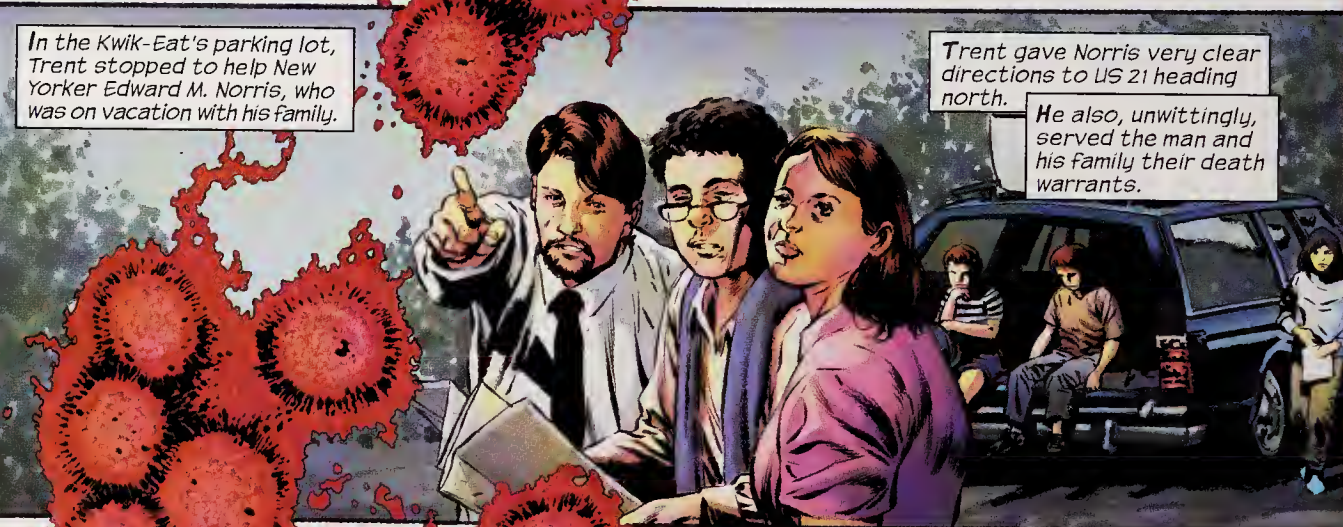
A ten-dollar bill that was crawling with death.



In the Kwik-Eat's parking lot, Trent stopped to help New Yorker Edward M. Norris, who was on vacation with his family.

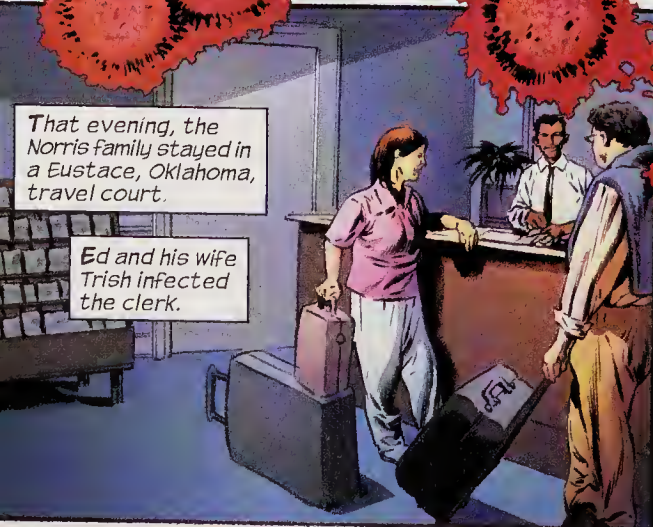
Trent gave Norris very clear directions to US 21 heading north.

He also, unwittingly, served the man and his family their death warrants.



That evening, the Norris family stayed in a Eustace, Oklahoma, travel court.

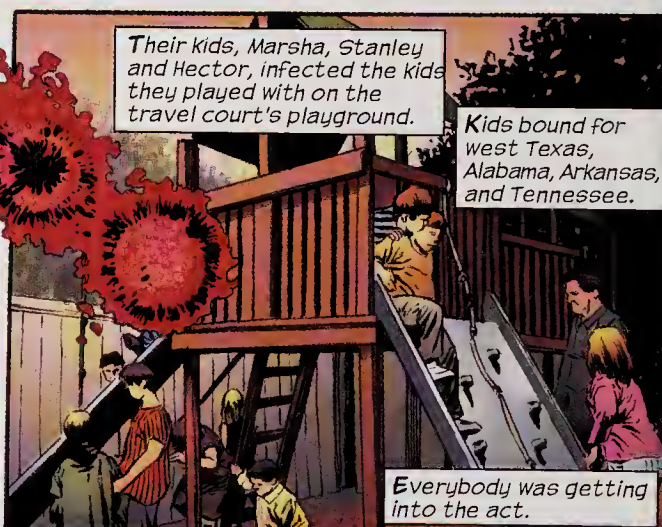
Ed and his wife Trish infected the clerk.



Their kids, Marsha, Stanley and Hector, infected the kids they played with on the travel court's playground.

Kids bound for west Texas, Alabama, Arkansas, and Tennessee.

Everybody was getting into the act.



The next morning, at a doctor's office in Polliston, Oklahoma--(poor Hector Norris was glass-eyed with a terrible fever)--the Norrises infected no less than twenty-five people.

Including a matronly woman, Sarah Bradford, who would go on to pass the disease to her entire bridge club that night.

After bridge, Sarah and her best friend Angela Duprey went out for a quiet drink in a cocktail bar.

They rehashed their playing and, simultaneously, managed to infect everyone in the Polliston bar with the disease that would soon be known across the disintegrating country as "Captain Trips."

The next day, Angela's teenaged daughter Samantha would go on to infect everybody in the swimming pool at the Polliston YMCA.

And so on.

Chain letters don't work. Everyone knows that. But this one, the Captain Trips chain letter, was working very well indeed.

The pyramid, with Charlie Campion as its tip, was being built.

All the chickens were coming home to roost.

ATLANTA, THE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL



NURSE PATTY GREER AND STUART REDMAN:



It's only your blood pressure.

Doctor's orders.

If it's doctor's orders, let me talk to the doctor.

I'm only doing my job, Mr. Redman. You don't want to get me in trouble, do you?

They had come to Arnette and got him on the afternoon of the seventeenth. Four army men and a doctor, all of them wearing sidearms.

Which meant, to Stuart, that he was in serious trouble.

Go back and tell them I won't cooperate.

They'll send somebody.

DR. DENNINGER:

Patty Greer is *quite* upset that you gave her trouble.

That's not very nice, Mr. Redman, is it?

I want some answers. I want to know where my friends are. I want to know why, if my town's been quarantined, I haven't seen anything about it on that TV in the corner.

I simply don't have the authority to tell you anything.

I know very little myself.

You've been taking my blood. If you want more, you either start giving me answers or you send big men to get it. And no matter *how* big they are, I'm gonna try to rip holes in those germ-suits.

Mr. Redman, your lack of cooperation may do your country a great disservice. Do you understand that?

From where I'm sitting, it's my *country* doing *me* the disservice. Now get the hell out of here and send someone who *can* talk to me!

Redman's fear was big inside him, like a runaway elephant.

It would be forty more hours before they sent him a man who would answer some of his questions.

OGUNQUIT, MAINE

What's on
your mind,
Frannie?

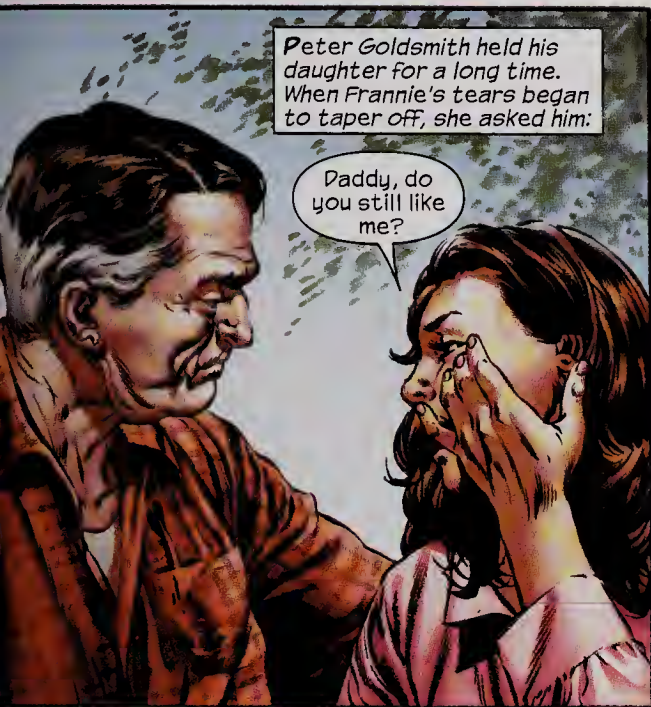
PETER AND FRANNIE GOLDSMITH:

I...
I'm
pregnant,
Daddy.

Oh,
Frannie.
For
sure?

For
sure.

Well, then,
you'd better
come over
here and sit
with me.



Peter Goldsmith held his daughter for a long time. When Frannie's tears began to taper off, she asked him:

Daddy, do you still like me?



What?
Yes, I still like you fine, Frannie.



Which made her cry again, but this time, they weren't great, braying sobs.

When she'd finished the second time...



Was it that Jess?

Yes.
He said he would marry me, but...
Oh, he means well, but...



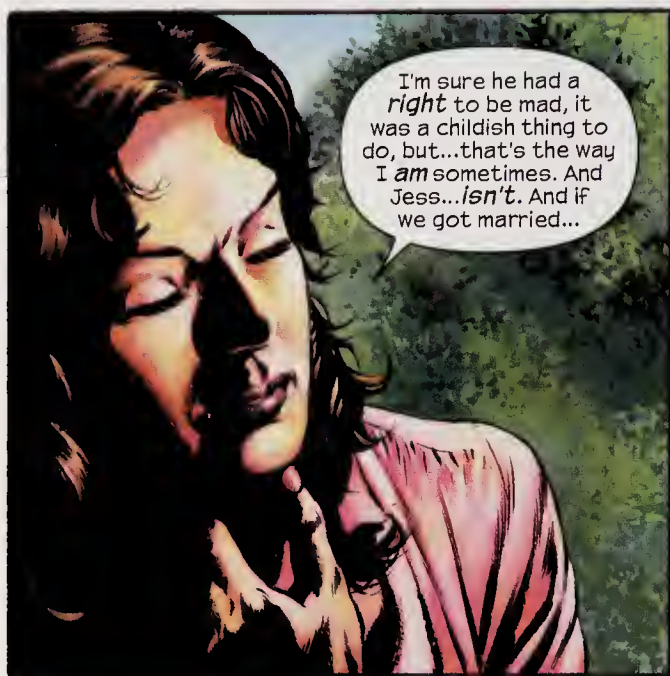
"Two semesters ago we went to a poetry reading, Daddy, given by a man named Ted Enslin...and the place was packed and everyone was listening very solemnly...

"And it struck me as so pretentious, and I...

"Well, you know me..."

"Frannie got the giggles."

"I did. And, Daddy, I couldn't stop. And Jesse was furious with me."



I'm sure he had a *right* to be mad, it was a childish thing to do, but...that's the way I *am* sometimes. And Jess...*isn't*. And if we got married...



You'd be unhappy?

I guess I would be, Daddy.



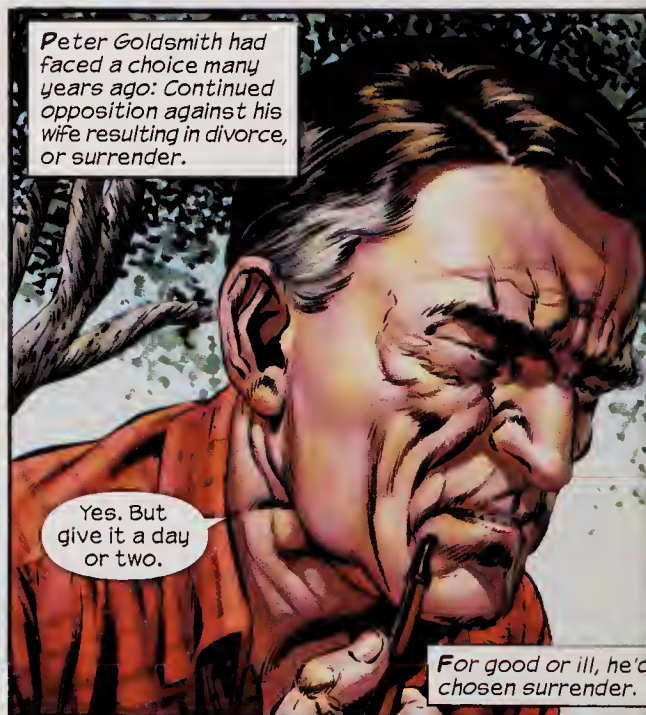
Don't let your mother change your mind, then.

She'll have plenty to say about all this, about who to blame, and I won't stop her, but...I won't *be* with her. Do you understand that?



Frannie did. Her father never tried to oppose her mother anymore. She had a cruel tongue, and it could get out of control.

I have to tell her, don't I?



Peter Goldsmith had faced a choice many years ago: Continued opposition against his wife resulting in divorce, or surrender.

Yes. But give it a day or two.

For good or ill, he'd chosen surrender.

U.S. ROUTE 27.

They set upon
Nick Andros just
around dusk.

A quartet of good ol'
boys: Vincent Hogan,
Mike Childress, Billy
Warner, and the worst
of 'em, Ray Booth.

Nick put up the
best fight he
could, decking
one of them--

And bloodying
another's nose--

So that for one
or two hopeful
moments, he
thought he might
actually win--

Then one of them,
the leader it seemed
like, caught Nick just
over the chin--

Shredding Nick's
lower lip with
some sort of
school ring--

And that
was pretty
much that--



Why don't he
say anything?
Why don't he yell
out, Ray?



I told you not to use any
names! And I don't give a
damn why he don't yell out!
I'm gonna mess him up!



Nick caught some
of Ray's words--



Somehow, his wild
kick connected with
Ray's belly--



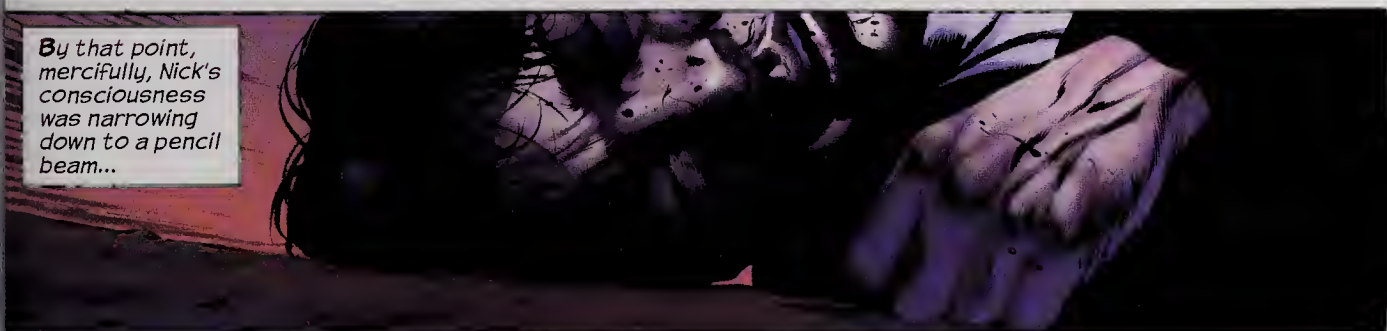
It was probably
the worst thing
Nick could've done.

Hol...
Hold 'im...

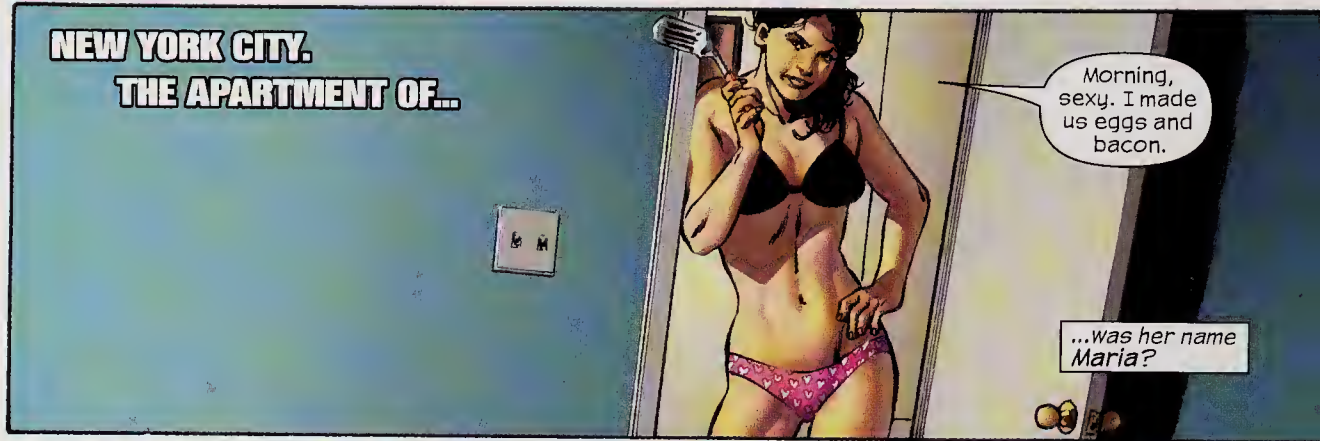
Hold
'im by the
hair...



Kicks and punches rained down on him, then, and Nick became a boneless, jittering puppet on a string, flopping around.



**NEW YORK CITY.
THE APARTMENT OF...**



Morning, sexy. I made us eggs and bacon.

...was her name *Maria*?

Larry couldn't remember. He was hung-over and in pain.



Oh, no, honey, I've got to run. There's, uh, someone I've got to see. My...

...my *mother*. I'm staying with her and I didn't call last night.

That much was true, at least.

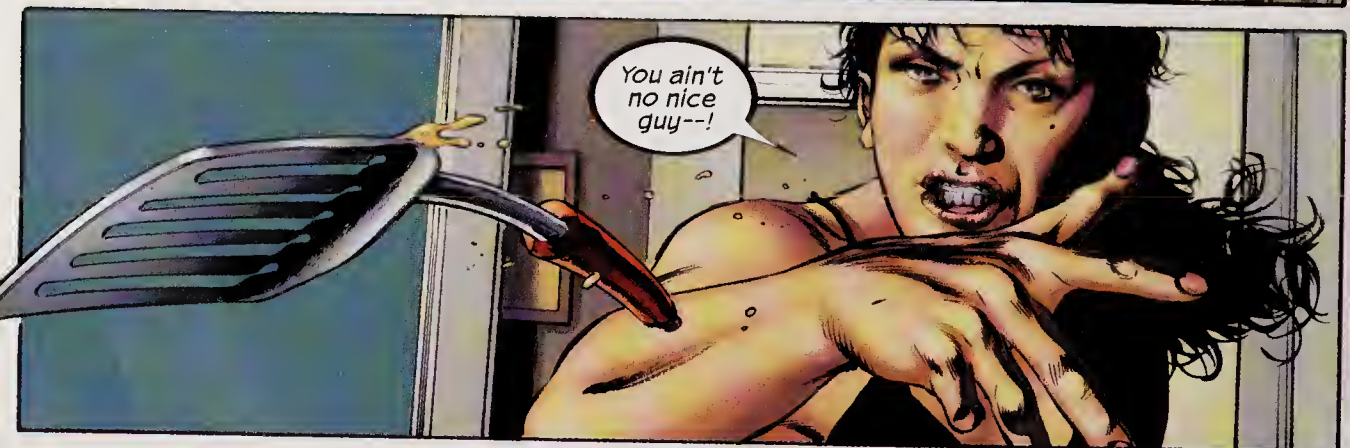
...
I thought you were a nice guy.



Look, I'm sorry. I have to go.



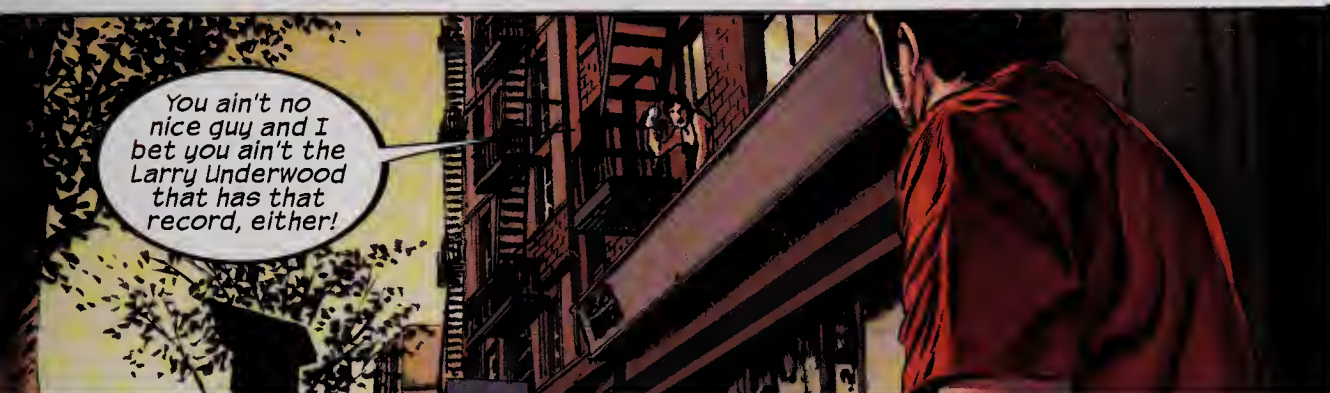
You ain't no nice guy--!



Any other man, the spatula would've missed. But this was Larry, remember.



You ain't no nice guy and I bet you ain't the Larry Underwood that has that record, either!

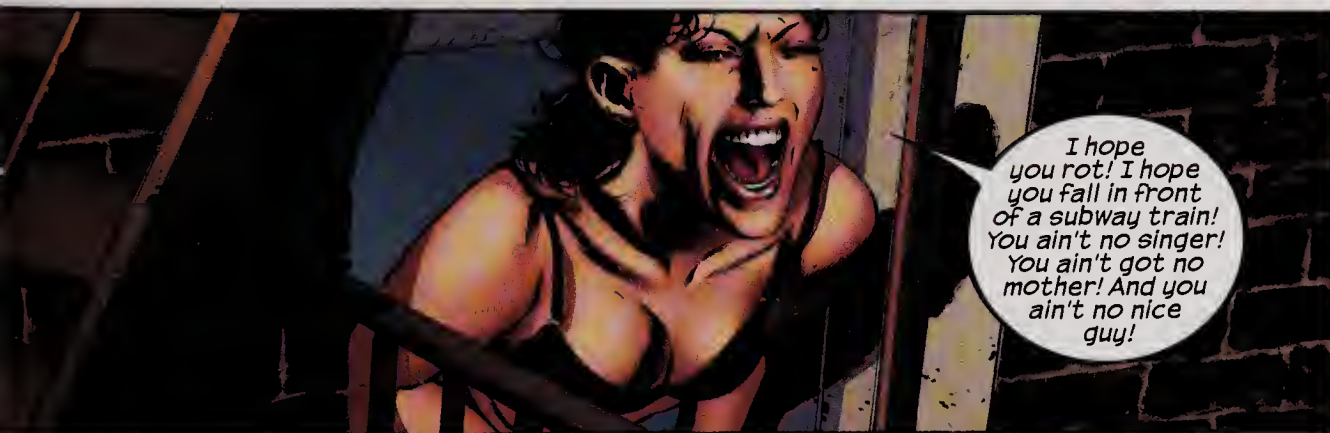


Jee-zus--!

CRASHH



I hope you rot! I hope you fall in front of a subway train! You ain't no singer! You ain't got no mother! And you ain't no nice guy!

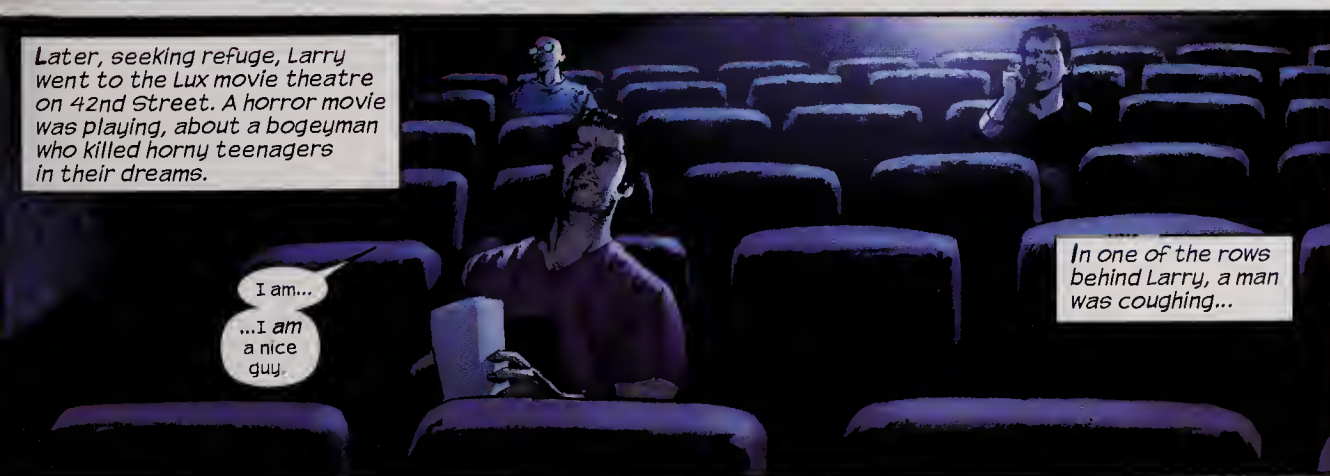


Later, seeking refuge, Larry went to the Lux movie theatre on 42nd Street. A horror movie was playing, about a bogeyman who killed horny teenagers in their dreams.

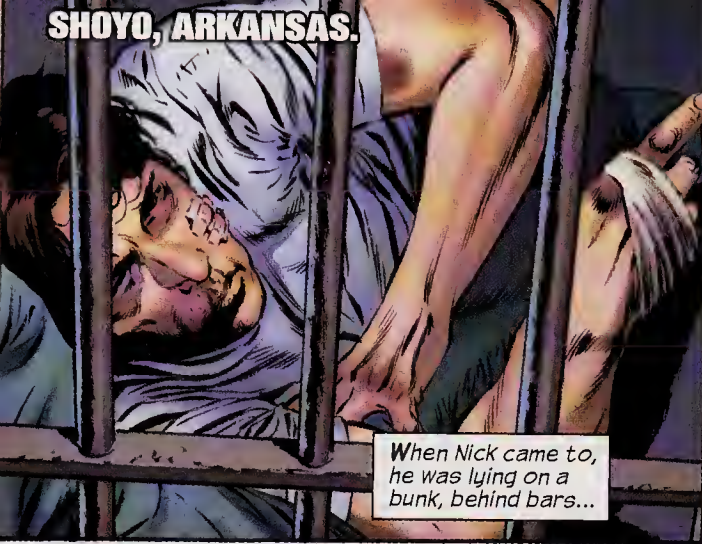
I am...

...I am a nice guy.

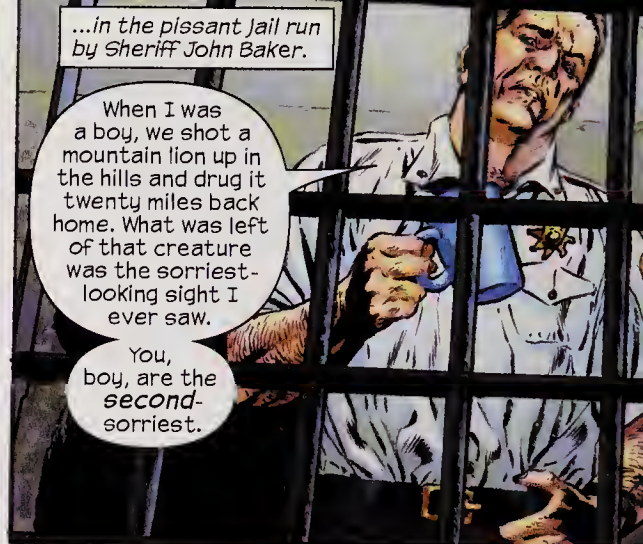
In one of the rows behind Larry, a man was coughing...



SHOYO, ARKANSAS.



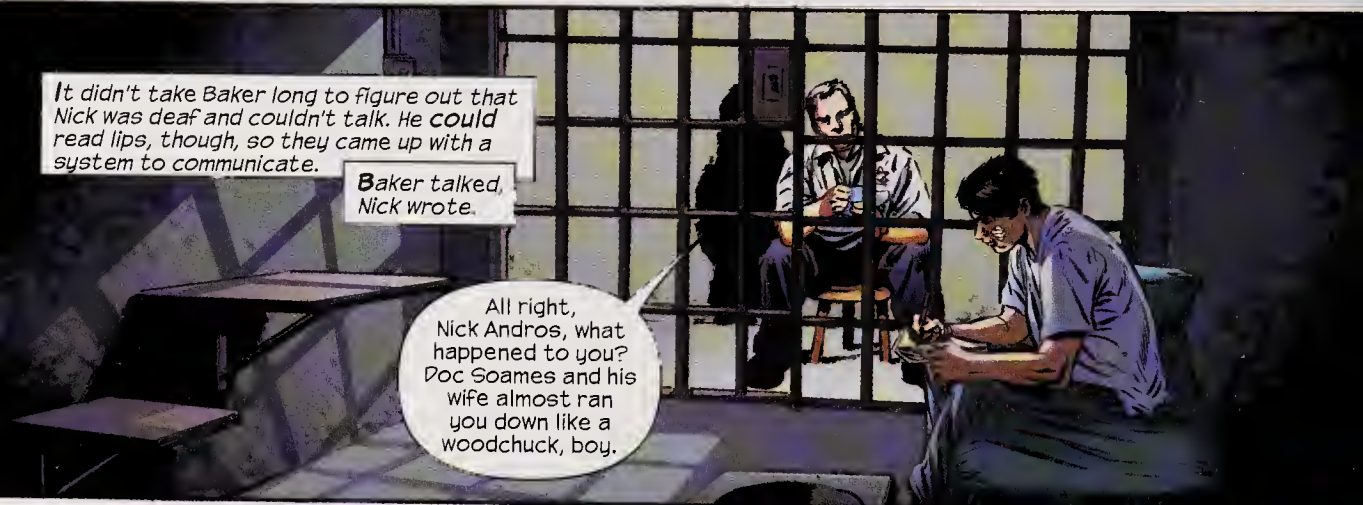
When Nick came to, he was lying on a bunk, behind bars...



...in the pissant jail run by Sheriff John Baker.

When I was a boy, we shot a mountain lion up in the hills and drug it twenty miles back home. What was left of that creature was the sorriest-looking sight I ever saw.

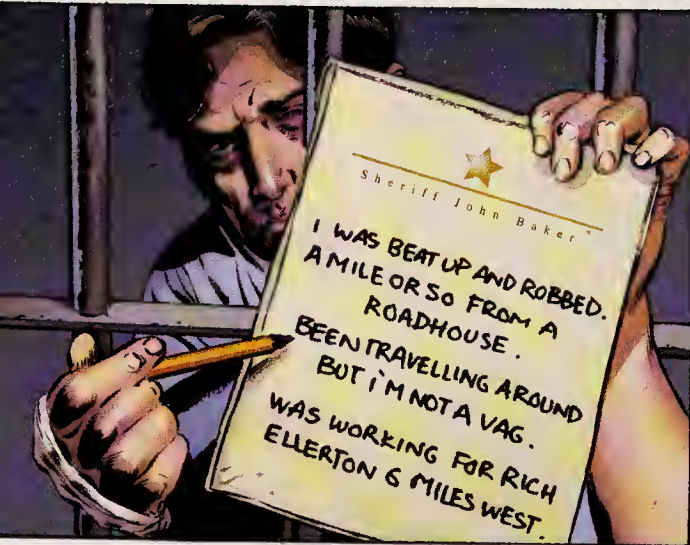
You, boy, are the **second-sorriest**.



It didn't take Baker long to figure out that Nick was deaf and couldn't talk. He **could** read lips, though, so they came up with a system to communicate.

Baker talked, Nick wrote.

All right, Nick Andros, what happened to you? Doc Soames and his wife almost ran you down like a woodchuck, boy.



I WAS BEAT UP AND ROBBED. A MILE OR SO FROM A ROADHOUSE. BEEN TRAVELLING AROUND BUT I'M NOT A VAG. WAS WORKING FOR RICH ELLERTON 6 MILES WEST.



You see Rich's dog?



BIG DOBERMAN BUT NICE NOT MEAN.



Why don't I let you out of there and you can come into my office?

The coffee hurt Nick's mouth but tasted good.

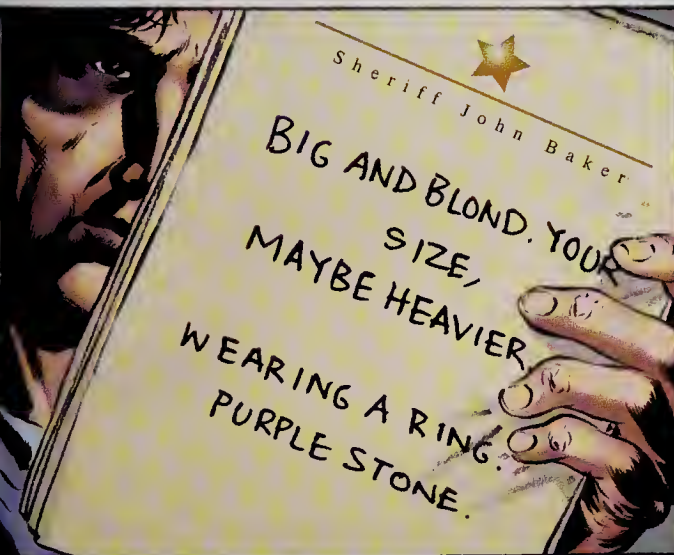
I tell you what. If you stick around, maybe we can get the guys who did this to you.

How many were there?



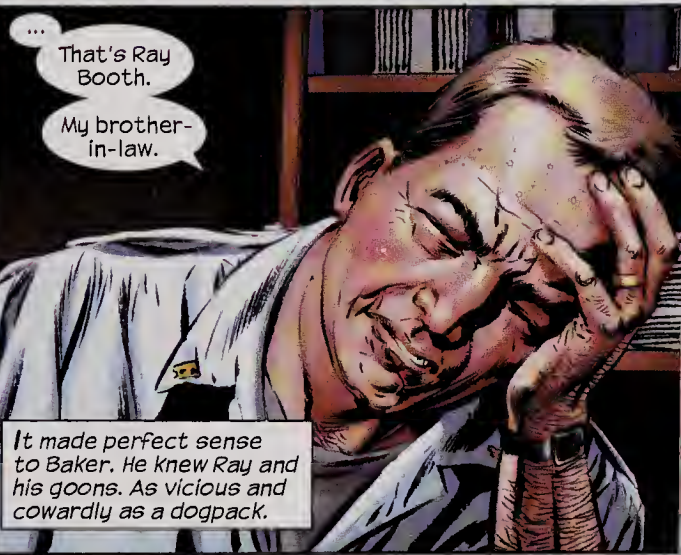
Think you could identify any of them?

Even one of 'em?



That's Ray Booth.

My brother-in-law.



It made perfect sense to Baker. He knew Ray and his goons. As vicious and cowardly as a dogpack.

Sheriff Baker was going to have to tell his wife Janey about Booth. She knew her brother was a bad egg, but it still probably meant no Janey-loving for Baker this week...

...yes, sir, between this deaf-dumb drifter and the swollen glands that were throbbing under Baker's jaw, it was shaping up to be a wonderful day.



ATLANTA, THE CDC.
FORTY HOURS LATER.



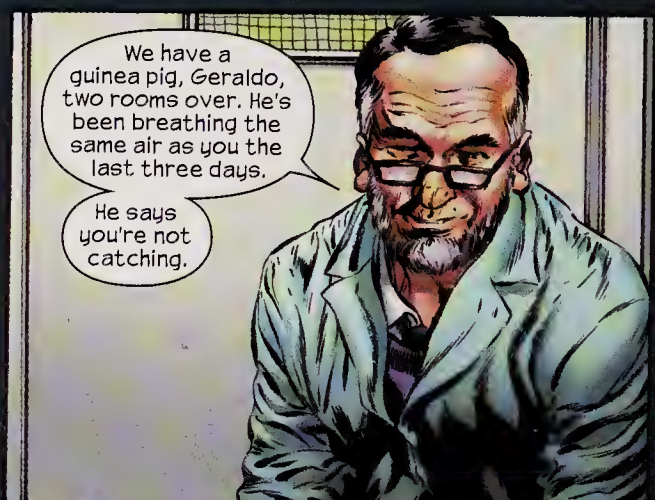
I'm Dick Deitz. Denninger said you wouldn't play ball unless someone told you what the score was.

What would you like to know?



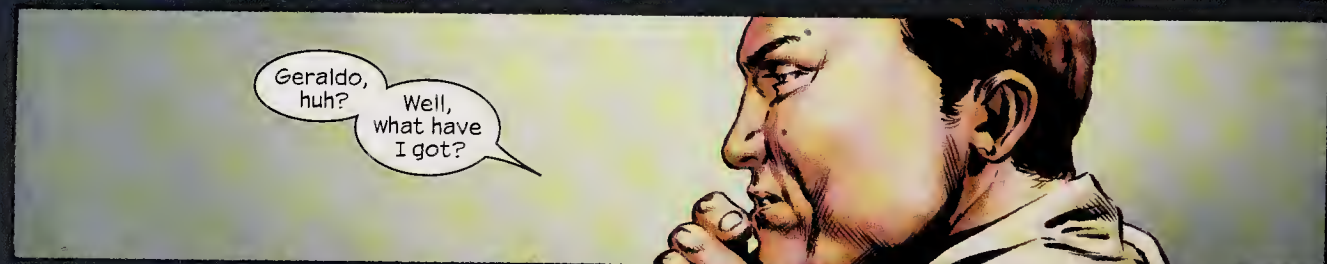
First...

I guess I want to know why you're not wearing one of those space-suits.



We have a guinea pig, Geraldo, two rooms over. He's been breathing the same air as you the last three days.

He says you're not catching.



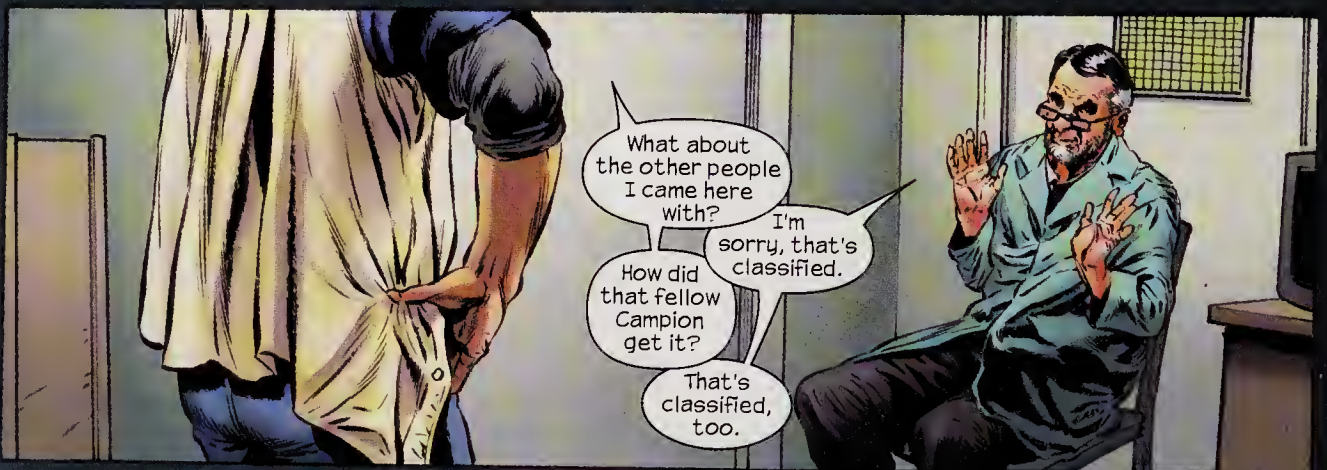
Geraldo, huh?

Well, what have I got?



So far as Denninger and his colleagues have been able to ascertain...

...you don't have *any* disease or illness at all.



What about the other people I came here with?

I'm sorry, that's classified.

How did that fellow Campion get it?

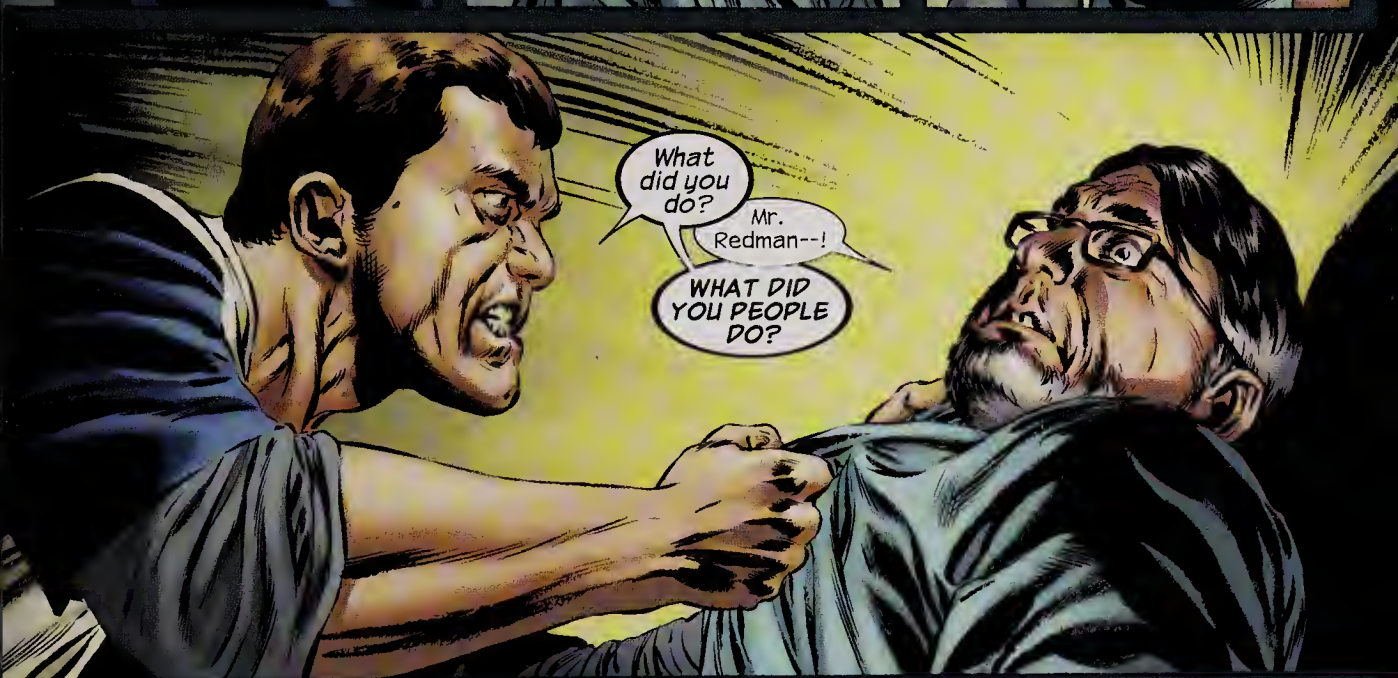
That's classified, too.

Classified.

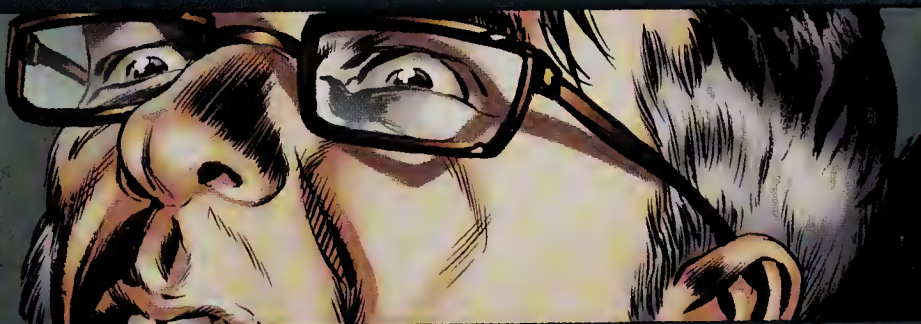
My guess
is that means
Army.

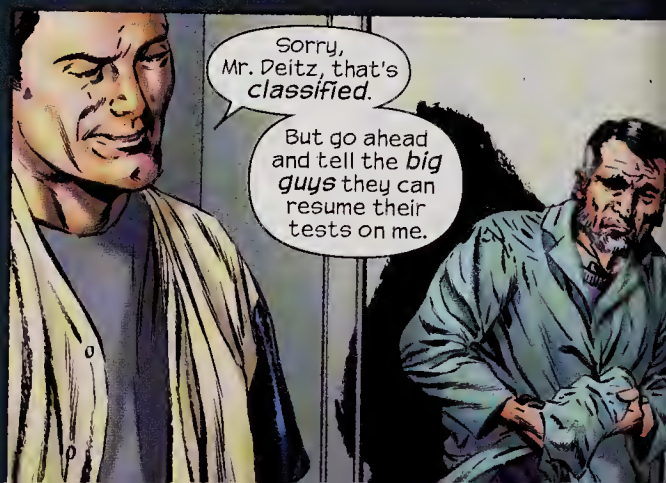
Mr.
Redman...

You've disappeared from
the face of the Earth. If you
start *knowing* too much?
The big guys might decide
that the safest thing
would be for you to
disappear *forever*.



Nothing. On this one,
responsibility spreads in
so many directions, it's
invisible. It was an accident.
We're trying to cope with it, but
we're not responsible. Not even
Campion's responsible; given
the circumstances, *I*
would've run, too.





That night, Stu slept better than he had since they brought him to Atlanta.

And had an extremely vivid dream.

(He had always dreamed a great deal--his late wife had complained about him thrashing and muttering in his sleep--but he'd never had a dream like *this* one.)

He was standing on a country road, under a blazing summer sun, surrounded by fields of green corn.

There was the sound of crows, far away.

Closer by, someone was playing a hymn on a guitar.

This is where I ought to get to, Stu thought, in the dream. Yeah, this is the place, all right.

(He half-remembered the hymn from his childhood, but couldn't place the tune...)

Then the music stopped.

And clouds came out of nowhere to blot out the sun.

And Stuart became afraid.

He felt as if there were something worse than the plague.

Something in the corn and it was watching him.



Him, Stu thought.
It's him, the man
with no face.

Oh dear
God.

Oh dear
God, no!





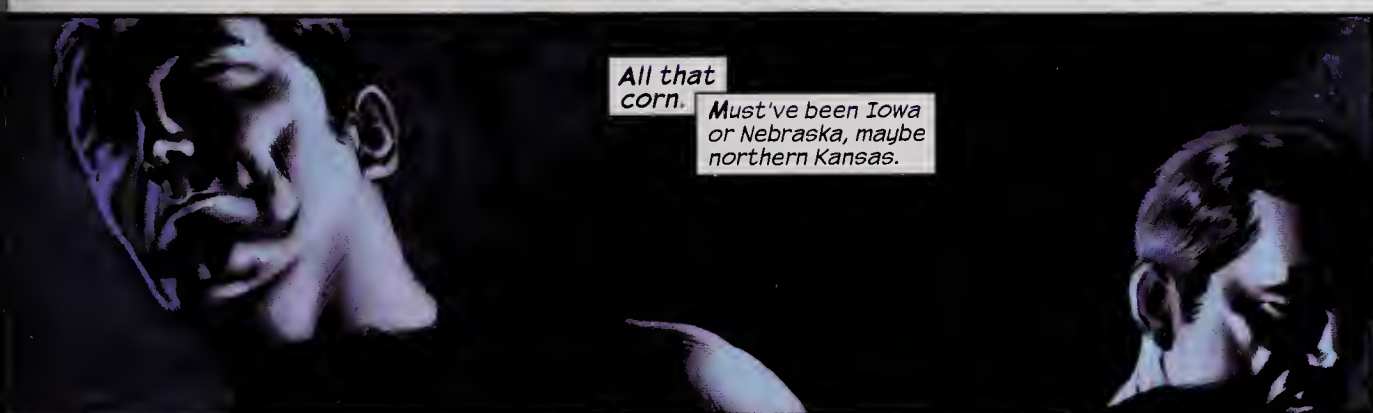
Then Stu woke up and the dream was gone, leaving behind feelings of disquiet, dislocation, and relief.



He went to the sink and splashed water on his face.



He went to the room's window and looked at the moon.



All that corn.

Must've been Iowa or Nebraska, maybe northern Kansas.



The strange thing was...

...Stuart had never been to any of those places.

chapter
THREE



REPORT ANY COLD SYMPTOMS
NO MATTER HOW MINOR
TO YOUR SUPERVISOR
AT ONCE



The clock in the nurses' station touched midnight, and Nurse Patty Greer's break ended.

Patty had to take Stuart Redman's blood, and it irked her.

She thought of him as an "old poop," and Patty-- who had broken a leg when she was seven and had never spent a day in bed since--had little patience for "old poops."

Good luck with Grumpy, Patty.

Thanks, Janine.

On her way to the white room where she would be sprayed and then helped into her hazard suit, Patty's nose began to tickle.



She sneezed, lightly, into her hankie three times, and thought nothing of it.



Before reaching the white room, Patty infected an orderly, a doctor just coming off his shift, and another nurse on her midnight rounds.

A new day--and a new chapter for Captain Trips--had begun.



**BURRACK, ARIZONA.
A DAY LATER.**

**LLOYD HENREID AND
ANDREW "POKE" FREEMAN:**

*Had killed six
people in as
many days.*

*The radio was
referring to them
as "interstate
fugitives."*

*Lloyd, especially,
liked the sound
of that.*



Gangbusters, Lloyd thought, then rified:

Take that, ya dirty rat.

Have a lead sandwich, ya lousy copper.



Their stolen car was full of dope and shooting irons.

Two .38s, three .45s, the .357 Mag that Poke called his "Pokerizer," six shotguns, and Lloyd's favorite: a Schmeisser submachine gun.



The idea was that they should pull a quick score. Get some money, get some maps, switch cars, and head north by the secondary roads.

Get out of Arizona.



You ready?

I guess so.

They were stoned, paranoid, running on fumes.

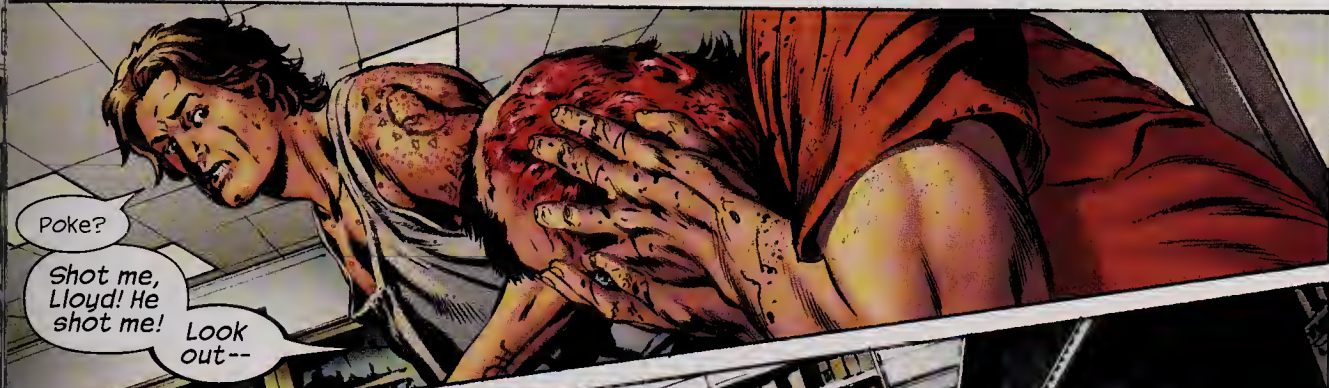


Inside, the shop smelled of stale licorice, sun, tobacco, and age.

Present were: the shop's proprietor; a cowboy buying smokes and Slim Jims; and a tired-looking woman deciding which spaghetti sauce her husband might like best.

SODA SODA WATER JUIC







Screw the money,
Lloyd thought. There's
money everywhere.

THE ARIZONA STATE PATROL.

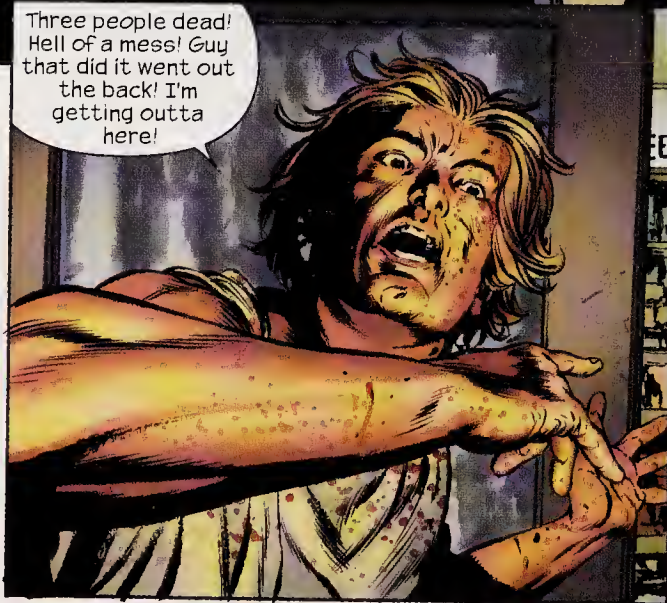
STOPPING BY FOR HOT
DOGS AND SLUSHEES.



Hold it--
hold it right
there!

What's
going on
here?

Three people dead!
Hell of a mess! Guy
that did it went out
the back! I'm
getting outta
here!



He's lying! He shot
Bill Markson! T'other
one shot Missus
Storm! I shot
t'other one!



Put
your hands
up--right--
now!



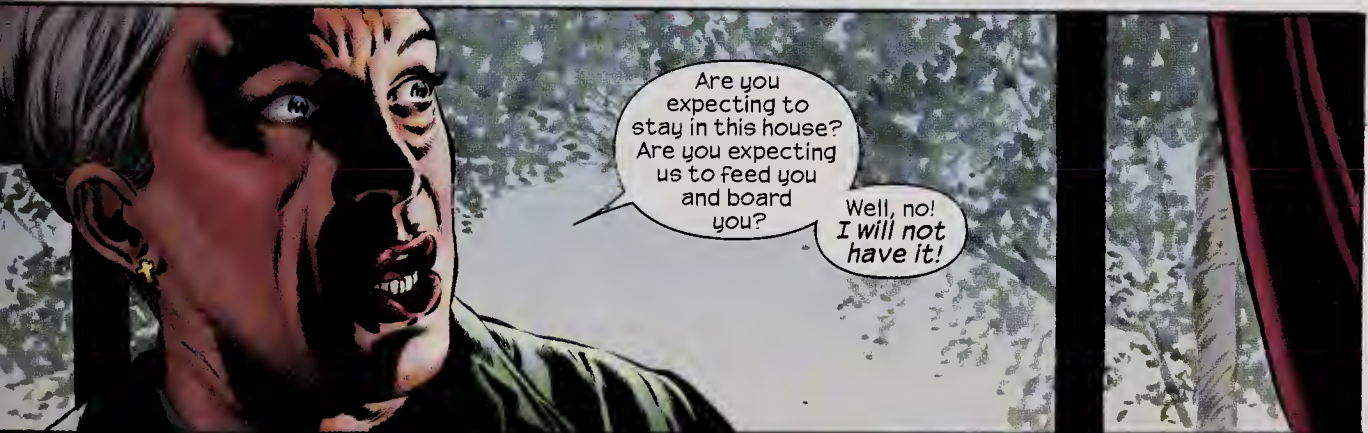
Less than an hour later, Lloyd Henreid
would be in the Apache County pen,
cursing the day he'd crossed paths with
Poke, a little over a year ago, on a
minimum security workfarm in Nebraska.

GUNQUIT, MAINE.

THE GOLDSMITH FAMILY PARLOR!

Frannie Goldsmith had been listening to the measured ticks and tocks of the grandfather clock in her mother's parlor all of her life.

For Frannie, the clock summed up the room. Oppressive and hateful. Everything she wished she could forget from her childhood.





You stopped caring about Frannie when Fred died. That was when you decided that caring *hurt* too much.

You doted on your dead family and forgot the part of it still living.

He was *my* son, too, but he's dead, Carla. And Frannie and her baby are alive. And if you drive her off, you'll have nothing but-- but this room and a husband who'll hate you for what you did.

Don't you talk about Fred! Don't you talk to me about my son!

Daddy...

Mother...

I... I want to go upstairs and... lie down.

I think... I think I'd better lie down...

Carla Goldsmith left the room, then, listing like a drunken woman. She wouldn't let her husband or daughter help her, though both offered.

Father and daughter stood in the parlor for a long time, in shock, listening to Carla's sobs coming from somewhere above them...

...as the grandfather clock ticked calmly on.

SHOYO, ARKANSAS.

THE HOME OF SHERIFF AND JANE BAKER.

**NICK ANDROS, HAVING HIS
FIRST HOME-COOKED MEAL
IN A LOOOONG TIME.**



I hope you're enjoying your dinner, Nick. My coleslaw's never been up to what his mother used to make.

That's what *he* says, anyway.

Aw, hell, Janey.



~cough~

~cough~

Your cold sounds worse. And look at your plate.

You haven't eaten enough to keep a *fly* alive.



I can afford to miss a meal now and then.



You're flushed, too. That means you're carrying a fever.

That means, you're not going out again tonight.

And that's *final*, John Baker.



My dear, I have prisoners. They need to be fed and watered.

Nick can do it. *You're* going to bed.

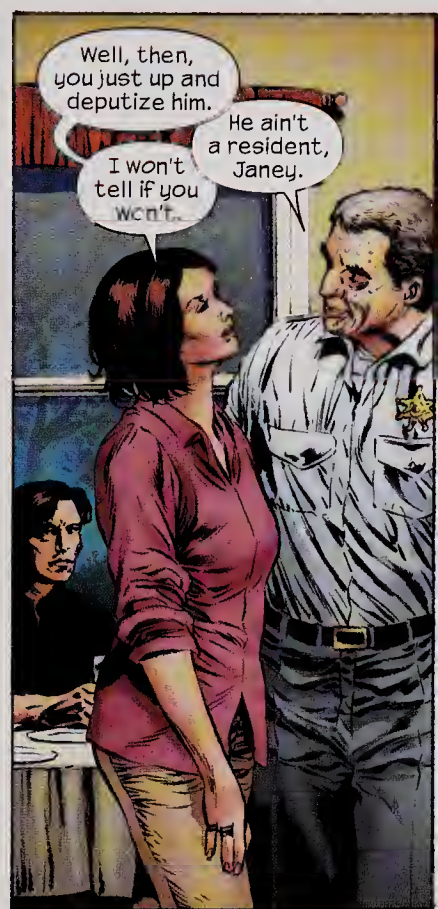
And don't you start with your insomnia talk.



I can't--
cough, cough--

--I can't send Nick, he's a deaf-mute.

Besides, he ain't a deputy.



Well, then, you just up and deputize him.

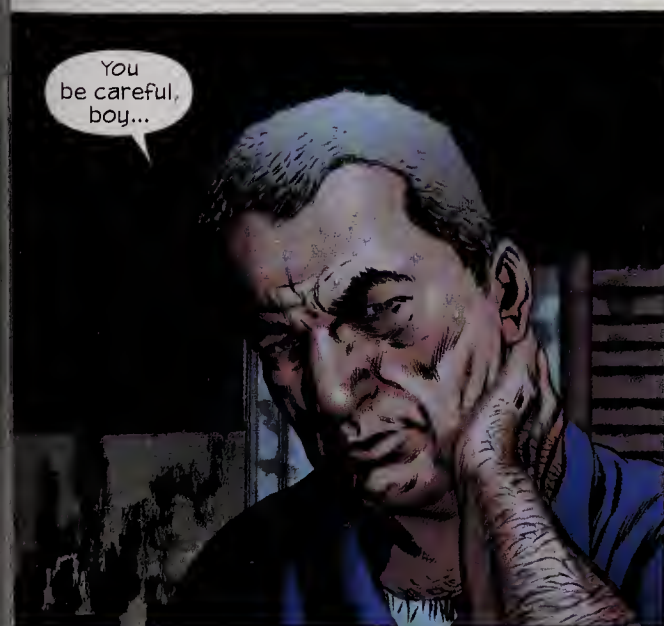
He ain't a resident, Janey.

I won't tell if you won't.

And that, friends, was how Nick Andros went from Shoyo prisoner to Shoyo deputy in less than twenty-four hours.



You've got your cot in the corner, Nick. It's hard, but it's clean.



You be careful, boy...



...remember you can't call for help if there's trouble.

SHOYO JAIL.

There are four jail cells in Sheriff Baker's station.

Vincent Hogan was in one--

Bill Warner was in one--

And Mike Childress was in one--

The fourth and last cell was empty because Ray Booth, brother to Jane Baker and ringleader of the three hoods who beat Nick black and blue, had skipped town.

For the most part, Nick sat turned away from the cells, so he wouldn't be able to lip-read his prisoners' taunts and jeers--

But every now and then he caught a tidbit--

So Nick had an appropriate response ready:

--chicken bastard, ain't he?

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.
LARRY UNDERWOOD:



Day off,
Mom?

I have a cold that
wants to break
me.

I hate to call
in sick on a Friday,
so many people do,
but I'm running a
fever and I have
swollen glands.



*And yet there she was,
scrambling him some eggs
with the same whisk she'd
been using since he was a
first-grader at PS 162...*



Did
you call the
doctor?

No, sir. I'll
stay home and
take aspirin, and by
tomorrow this time
I'll be on the downhill
side of it.



*Since there was no
arguing with her, Larry
tried to help instead.*

Honestly.
You're going to
give yourself a
hernia so I can
watch "Let's
Make a Deal."



After getting her juice and NyQuil at the bodega, they realized there was little to do except get on each other's nerves.

Larry told Alice he might go out and see some more of the city.

That's a good idea...

I...I'm going to take a nap, I think.

You're a good boy, Larry...

Rest, Mom.

I love you.

He took the subway to Times Square, getting more excited with each stop.

He expected the city to look different since the last time he'd seen it. More magical, somehow.

49 St Subway St
Downtown & Ekl, n M

But when he came up the stairs from the R train...



Extreme covert countermeasures, Len.

"Troy."

Bill--

I repeat, Len...

"Troy..."

**U.S. 36, SIPE SPRINGS.
ON THE WAY TO HOUSTON.**

**A REPORTER AND A PHOTOGRAPHER
FOR THE HOUSTON DAILY.**

Baby, can you dig your man?

He's a righteous man...

Baby, can you dig your man?

Holy Gawd, what the hell is this?



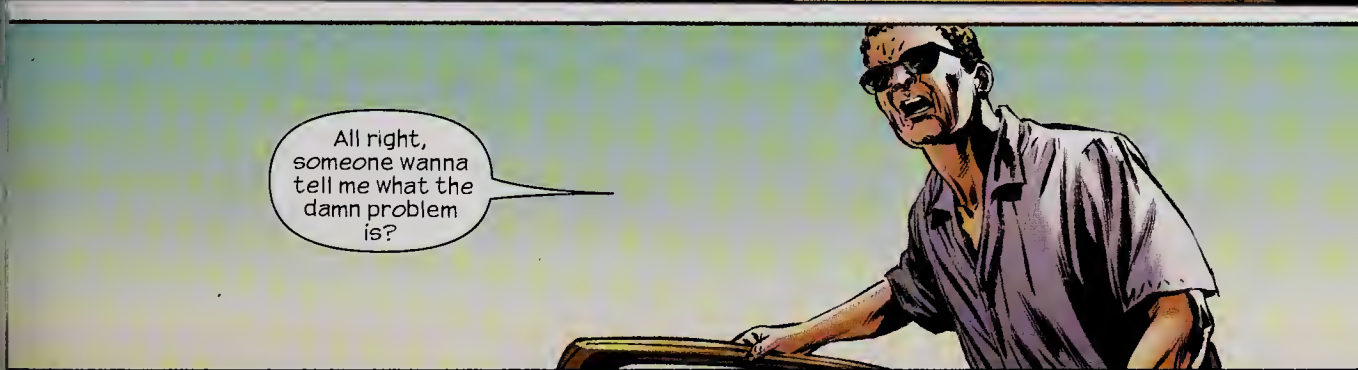
I don't know...



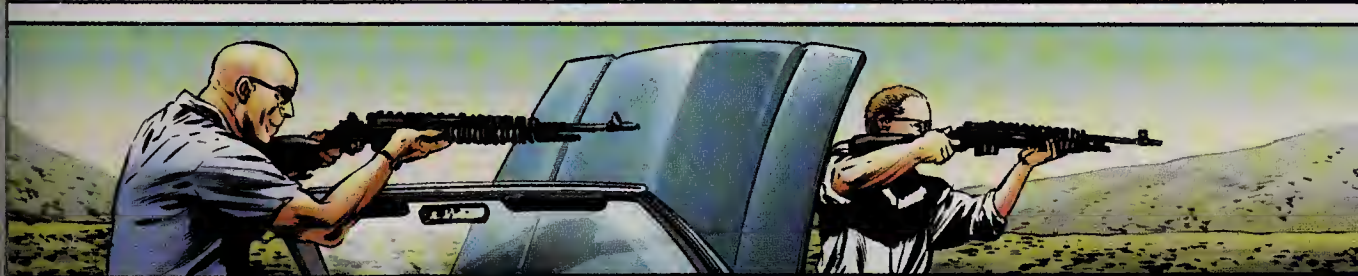
Listen--

Listen, maybe we better--

Wait here if you want--



All right, someone wanna tell me what the damn problem is?



Holy--

The reporter had spent three years in the Army. Even though they weren't wearing uniforms, he recognized the men as soldiers.



As the slugs blew out his chest and groin, he wondered if his executioners were somehow connected to the mysterious flu he was investigating.





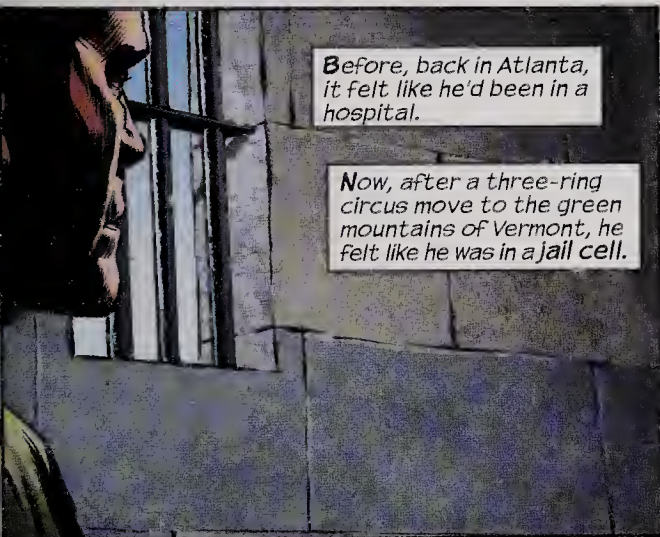
TOVINGTON, VERMONT.
THE OTHER CDC.

Stu Redman was
frightened.



Before, back in Atlanta,
it felt like he'd been in a
hospital.

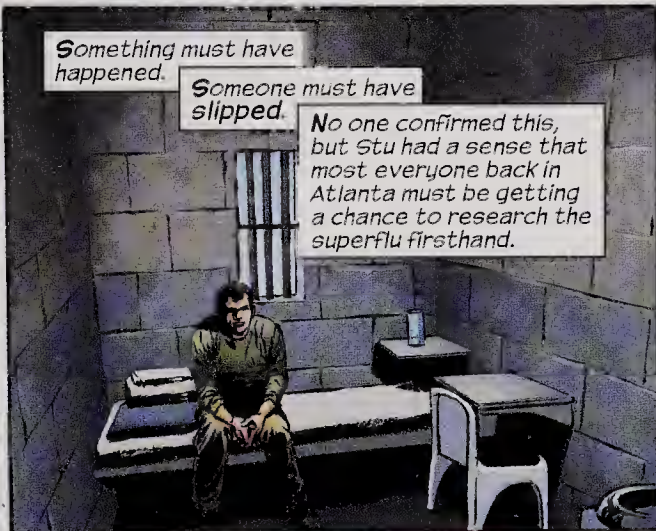
Now, after a three-ring
circus move to the green
mountains of Vermont, he
felt like he was in a jail cell.



Something must have
happened.

Someone must have
slipped.

No one confirmed this,
but Stu had a sense that
most everyone back in
Atlanta must be getting
a chance to research the
superflu firsthand.



They were still doing tests on him
here, but they seemed...desultory.
The schedule was slipshod.

Mr.
Redman?



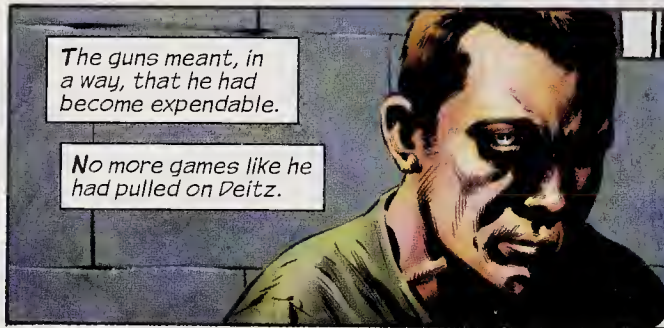
...even worse was
the guns.

No one came into his room
unless accompanied by a
soldier with a gun.



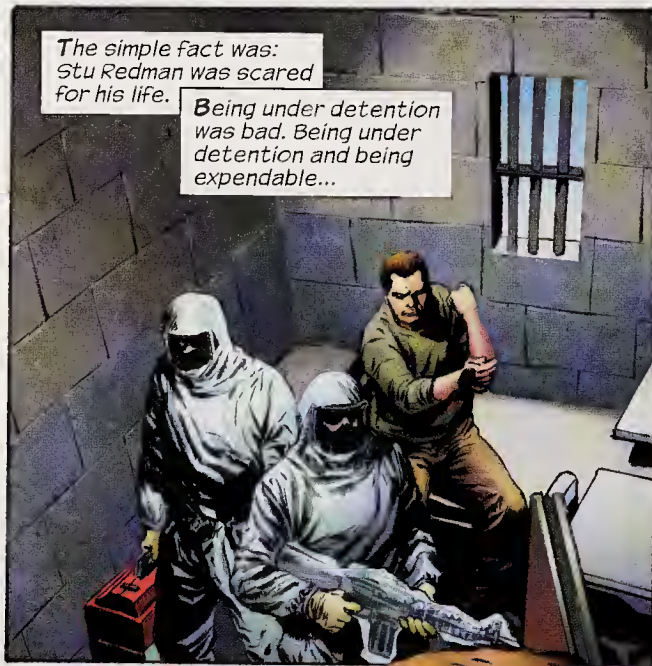
The guns meant, in
a way, that he had
become expendable.

No more games like he
had pulled on Deitz.



The simple fact was:
Stu Redman was scared
for his life.

Being under detention
was bad. Being under
detention and being
expendable...



...that was
very bad.

Thank
you, Mr.
Redman.



And not for the
first time...

...Stu wondered if it
would be possible to
escape from this
place.

chapter
FOUR



SHOYO, ARKANSAS.

Nick Andros, manning the prison while Sheriff Baker recuperates at home.



BILLY WARNER:

Ray's gonna be back, you know. And when he gets back, you're gonna wish you were *blind* as well as deaf and dumb--



MIKE CHILDRESS:

Hey, dummy, can we get some breakfast, do you think?



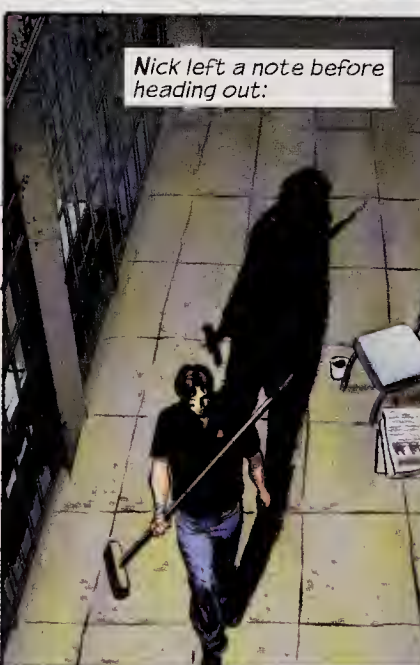
VINCE HOGAN:

...and a doctor...

...I'm sick... need a doctor...



Nick left a note before heading out:



Sheriff John Baker

DEAR SHERIFF OR WHOEVER,
I'VE GONE TO GET BREAKFAST
FOR THE PRISONERS AND TO
SEE IF I CAN HUNT DOC
SOAMES DOWN FOR VINCE
HOGAN, WHO APPEARS TO BE
REALLY SICK, NOT PLAYING
POSSUM.

Nick Andros

THE HARBORSIDE HOTEL OGUNQUIT, MAINE.



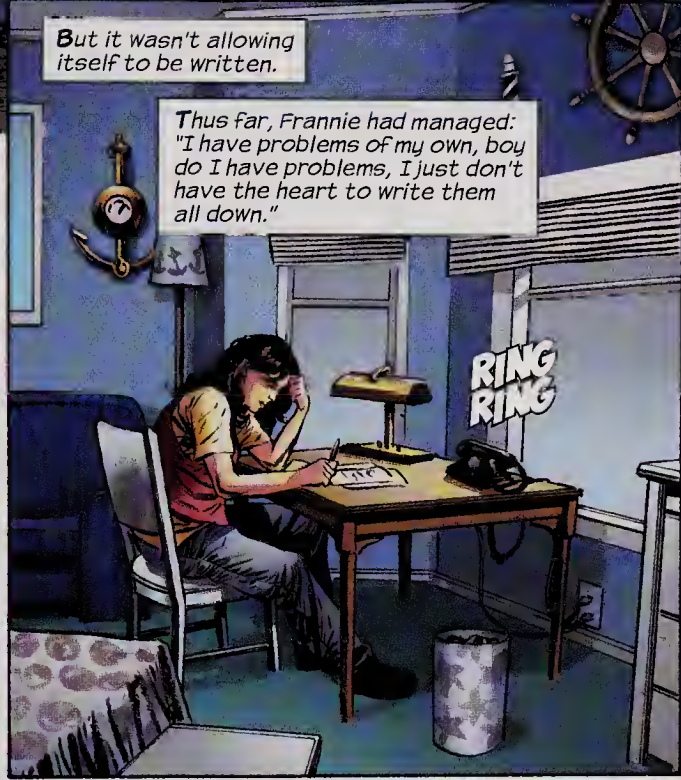
Where Frannie Goldsmith's been trying, for the last three hours, to write a letter to Grace Duggan, a high school chum now going to Smith.

It wasn't meant to be a confessional "I'm-pregnant" letter, just a friendly "How-are-you?" letter.



But it wasn't allowing itself to be written.

Thus far, Frannie had managed: "I have problems of my own, boy do I have problems, I just don't have the heart to write them all down."



Jess, the father of Frannie's child, calling from Portland.

...you got a lot of static at home, huh?

Well, I got some.

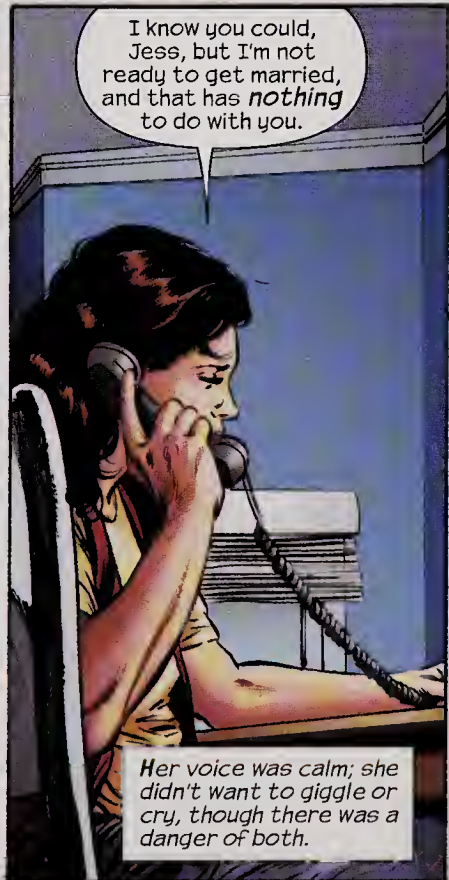


She didn't want to get into the scene she'd had with her mother; that would've made them conspirators of a sort, and Fran and Jess weren't, not anymore.

My offer still stands, Frannie. Say yes, and I can buy a couple of rings and be there this afternoon.



I know you could, Jess, but I'm not ready to get married, and that has *nothing* to do with you.



Her voice was calm; she didn't want to giggle or cry, though there was a danger of both.



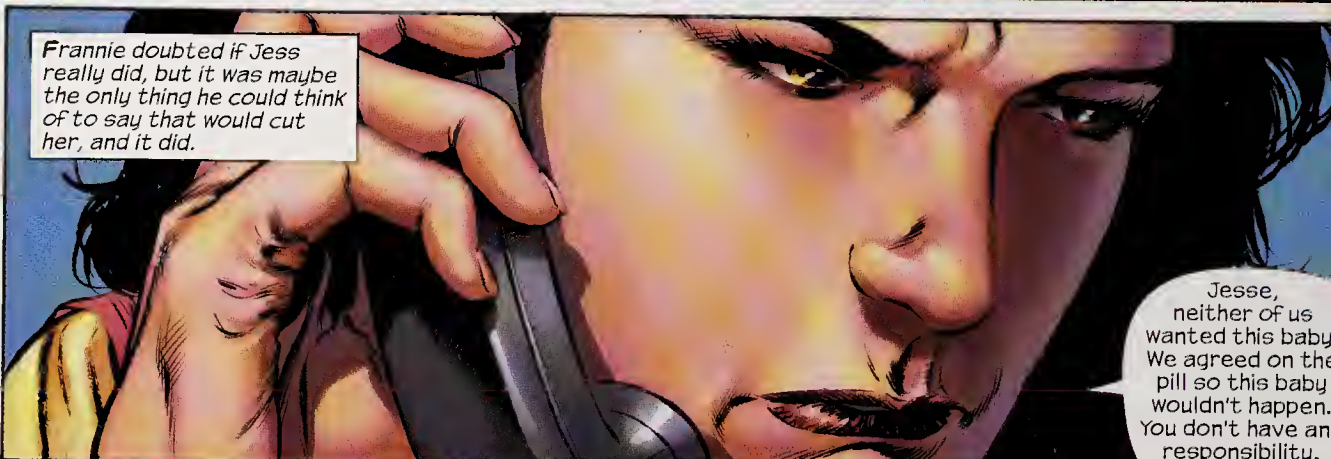
What about the baby?

I'm going to have it.

And then give it up?

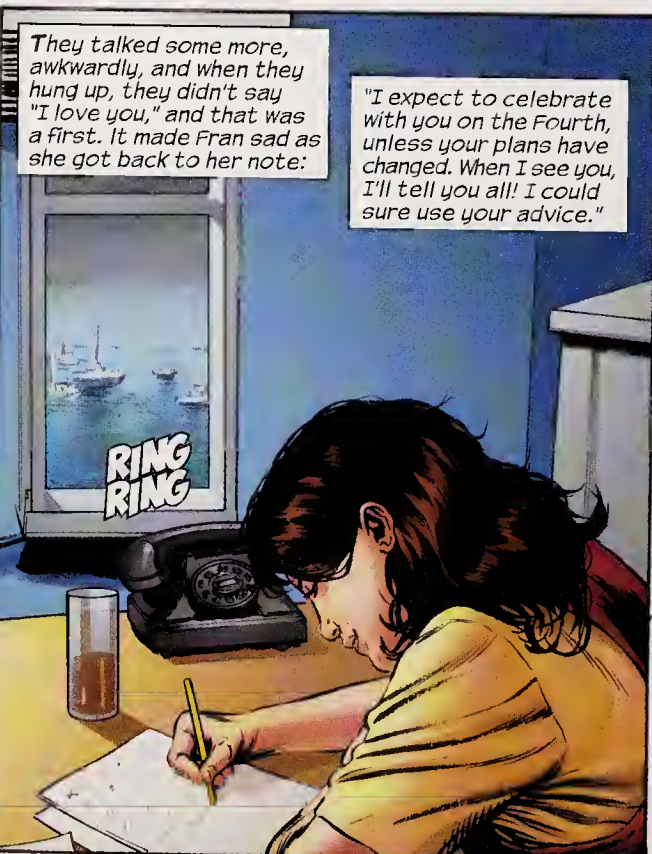
I haven't decided.

I wonder about that baby...



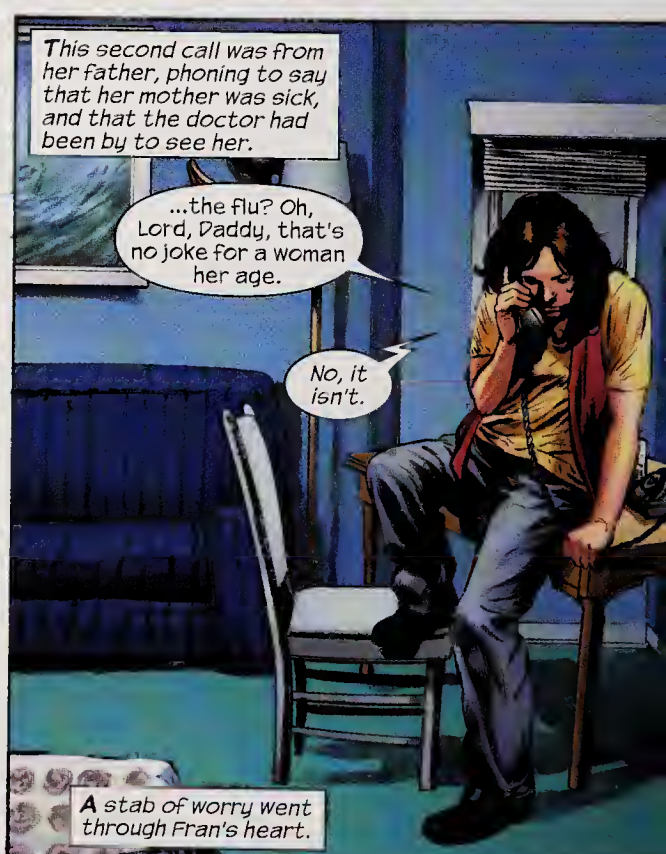
Frannie doubted if Jess really did, but it was maybe the only thing he could think of to say that would cut her, and it did.

Jesse, neither of us wanted this baby. We agreed on the pill so this baby wouldn't happen. You don't have any responsibility.



They talked some more, awkwardly, and when they hung up, they didn't say "I love you," and that was a first. It made Fran sad as she got back to her note:

"I expect to celebrate with you on the Fourth, unless your plans have changed. When I see you, I'll tell you all! I could sure use your advice."



This second call was from her father, phoning to say that her mother was sick, and that the doctor had been by to see her.

...the flu? Oh, Lord, Daddy, that's no joke for a woman her age.

No, it isn't.

A stab of worry went through Fran's heart.

I told Doc Edmonton everything. About your baby, about the fight you and Carla had. I wanted to know if any of that could have caused her...physical breakdown.

He said no. Flu is flu.



Flu made who...

Edmonton said there's a nasty breed going around.

And you know how busy your mother keeps herself with her charities; she works harder than *me*...

She had the welcome mat out for the first evil germ that passed her way--that's *all*.

Peter was trying to keep his daughter from feeling guilty.

It wasn't working.

Do you think she'd mind if I--?

Right now she would, Frannie, but give her time. She'll come around.

Maybe she would if I gave up my baby, Fran thought.

At the end of their conversation, Peter promised his daughter he would visit or call if Carla's situation worsened.

Then, after much agonizing, Fran finally finished her letter to Grace: "Believe in me and I'll believe in you."

Outside, purple and black clouds were gathering over Ogunquit Harbor.

A storm was coming.

**LOS ANGELES,
CALIFORNIA.**

**SANTA MONICA
BOULEVARD.**

Jane's
Place, we're
open.

POKER
L.A.

Jane's
Place

To
anything?

Listen,
wiseguy, this
isn't...

...Wait-
a-minute,
Larry?

Yeah,
Arlene, it's
me. Hi.

Where are
you, Larry?
Nobody's seen
you.

**NEW YORK CITY.
TIMES SQUARE.**

Well, I'm on the
East Coast...

Somebody told me there
were bloodsuckers on me
and I ought to get out of
the pool until they
dropped off.

Come to
think of it, I
heard something
about that, big
spender.

Yeah, listen,
Arlene, is Wayne
Stuckey around? I
want to thank him
for something.

You mean
you haven't
heard?

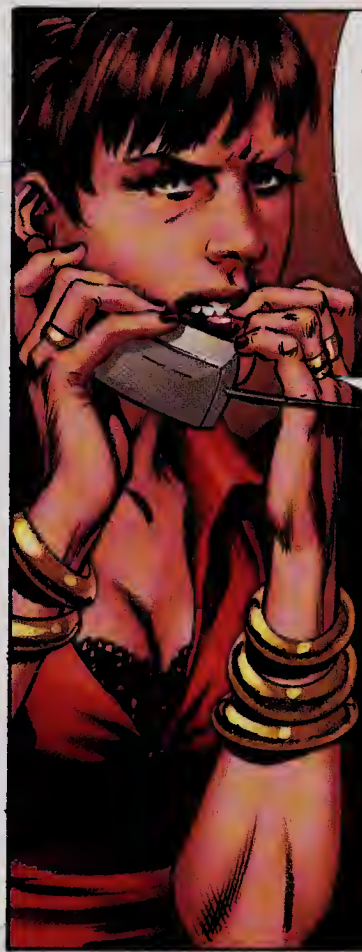
He's in
the hospital
with this flu
bug...

Captain Trips, they're calling it out here, not that it's any laughing matter. People are scared, staying in.

We've got six empty tables, and you know Jane's *never* has any empty tables.



How's Wayne doing?



Who knows? The hospitals have wards and wards of sick people, but no one can visit them. And there are a lot of soldiers on the streets, riding around in convoys with guns.

It's *spooky*, Larry. People are saying the army got careless with one of those little plague jars...

That's just scare talk. There hasn't been anything on the news.

Out here there's been little things in the paper about getting flu boosters, but that's it...

You're better off where you are if you haven't gotten a whiff of this.

Larry was thinking of his mother's cold. How it had gotten better, then worse, and was now awful...

And hadn't there been a lot of sneezing and coughing in the arcade he'd been in earlier...? Like a TB ward...?

New York, thy name is paranoia.



PHOENIX, ARIZONA. THE MUNICIPAL JAIL.



MAXIMUM SECURITY.

Lloyd Henreid, described in the papers as "the baby-faced, unrepentant killer," meeting with his court-appointed attorney, Andy Devins:

You were scared of Poke Freeman.

Well, I wasn't exactly--

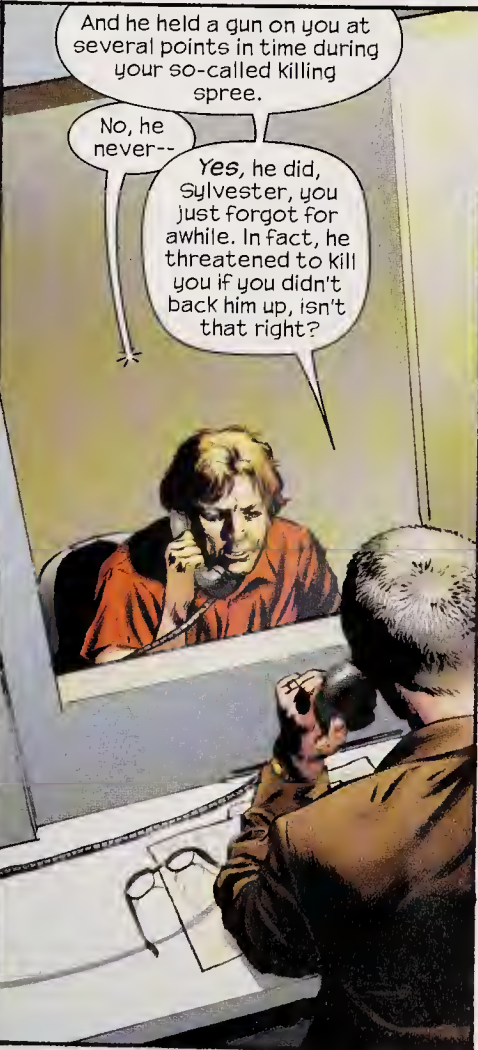
You were **terrified**, Sylvester. You were sweating bullets.



And he held a gun on you at several points in time during your so-called killing spree.

No, he never--

Yes, he did, Sylvester, you just forgot for awhile. In fact, he threatened to kill you if you didn't back him up, isn't that right?



Listen, Mr. Devins--

First of all, my name's not--



Listen to me, **Sylvester**, and listen carefully.

You don't have the slightest idea how big a jam you're in.



You're going to trial in *four* days. We'll have a jury on the first day. The state will present its case on the second. I'll try to take up three days, I'll filibuster on my opening and closing statements--

--but then the jury will retire and find you guilty in about three *minutes*.

And then?

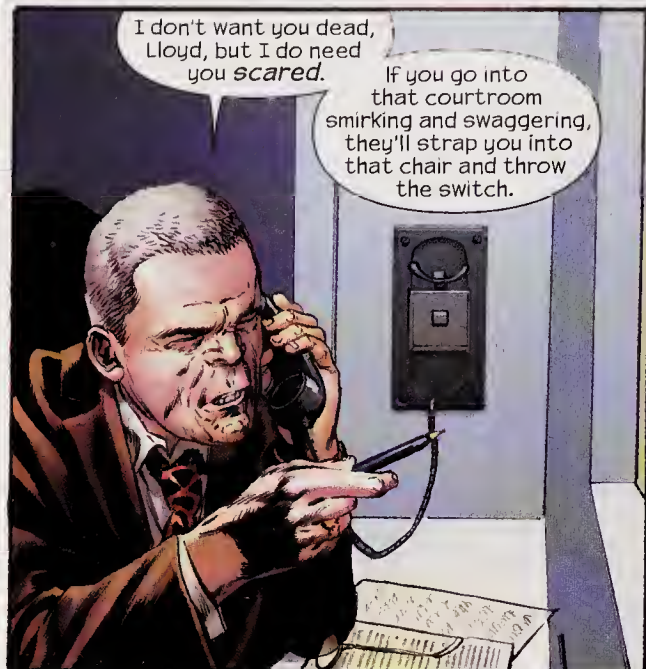
Why, then you go on to Death Row at state prison and enjoy all that good food until it's time to ride the lightning.

It won't take long...

You scared, Sylvester?

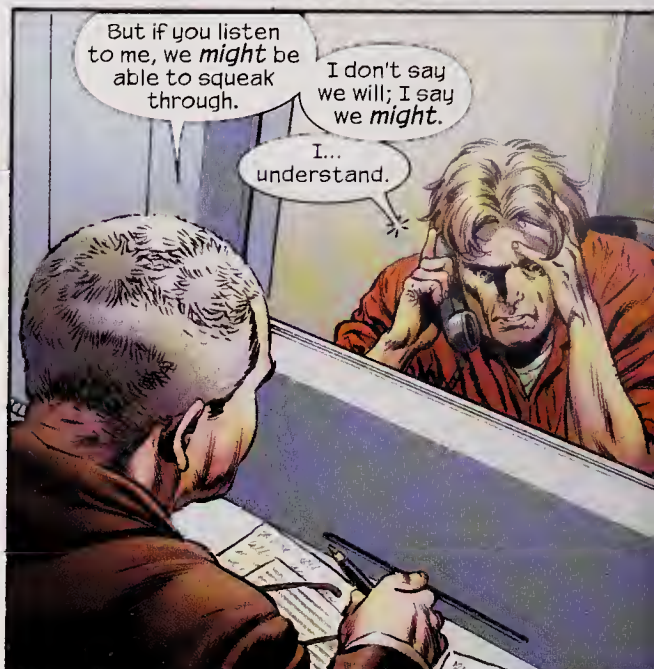
C-Christ, yes, I'm scared.

From what you say, I'm a dead man.



I don't want you dead, Lloyd, but I do need you *scared*.

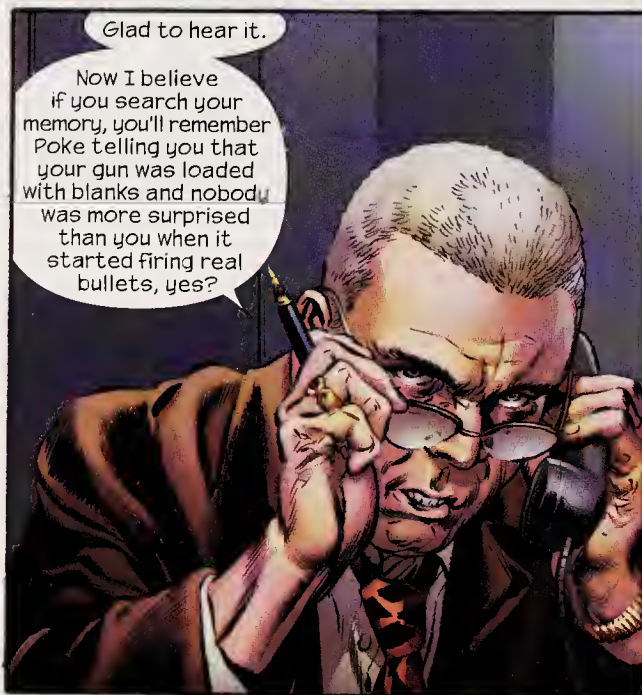
If you go into that courtroom smirking and swaggering, they'll strap you into that chair and throw the switch.



But if you listen to me, we *might* be able to squeak through.

I don't say we will; I say we *might*.

I... understand.



Glad to hear it.

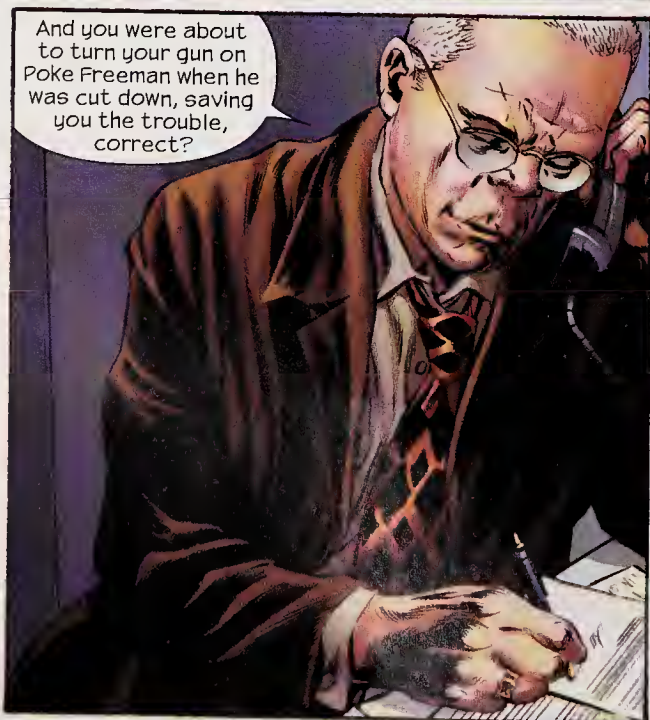
Now I believe if you search your memory, you'll remember Poke telling you that your gun was loaded with blanks and nobody was more surprised than you when it started firing real bullets, yes?



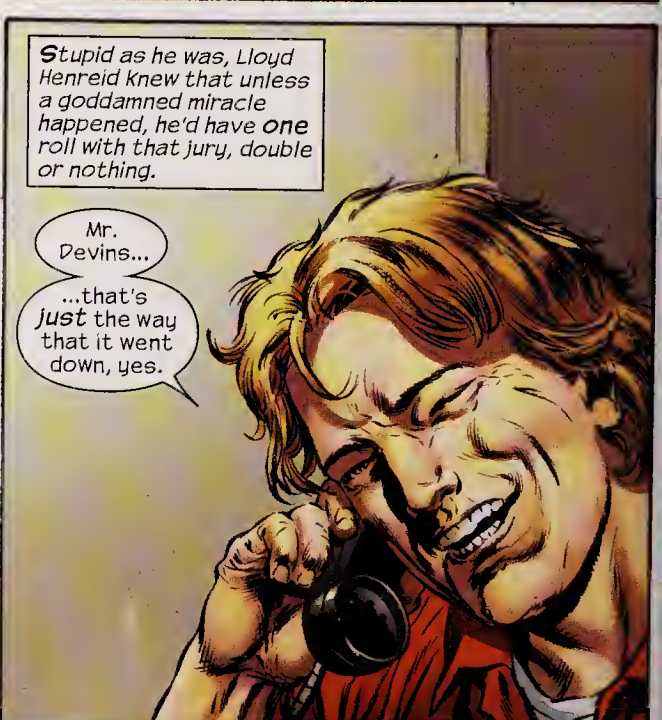
Lloyd was like a bad student who had finally grasped his teacher's lesson.

Yes, sir...

...I 'bout damn near had a, a hemorrhage.



And you were about to turn your gun on Poke Freeman when he was cut down, saving you the trouble, correct?



Stupid as he was, Lloyd Henreid knew that unless a goddamned miracle happened, he'd have one roll with that jury, double or nothing.

Mr. Devins...

...that's just the way that it went down, yes.

HOYO, ARKANSAS.
DOC SOAMES:

Sheriff Baker's dead. He died a little after two o'clock this morning. Now his wife Janey's sick with it.

Doc Soames's car had been weaving slowly down Main Street when Nick happened across it and waved for him to stop.

Soames looked as if he'd aged twenty years since the last time Nick saw him, when Soames treated his injuries.

And Baker's not the only one. I've signed twelve death certificates in the last twelve hours, and I know another twenty who will be dead by noon unless God shows some mercy.


But I doubt if this is God's duty.

WHAT'S THE
MATTER
WITH THEM?


I don't know, but I've got it myself.

(Although what I'm suffering most from right now is simple exhaustion...)

Help me out of this car, Nick, and to that bench over there. You're good to talk to; I suppose you've been told that...




The symptoms are all very common: Chills. Fever. Headache. Weakness and loss of appetite. Painful urination, swelling of the glands, armpits, and in the groin. Respiratory weakness and failure.




Those are symptoms of the common cold, of influenza, of pneumonia. We can cure all those things, Nick, but not this.

This thing escalates, backs up, escalates again; debilitation increases; the swelling gets worse; until finally, in every case I believe, death.




Someone made a mistake.

And they're trying to cover it up.



It sounds slightly paranoid, doesn't it?

But none of the phones in Shoyo work. And furthermore, the two Shoyo exits from the turnpike are closed off with barriers which say *road construction*, but there's no construction.



There are soldiers, too, I've heard. At the exits, on the backroads. Army vehicles blocking every way in and out of town.

I repeat: Someone made a mistake and now they're trying to cover it up. And, in the meantime, how many people will die?

Madness, madness...

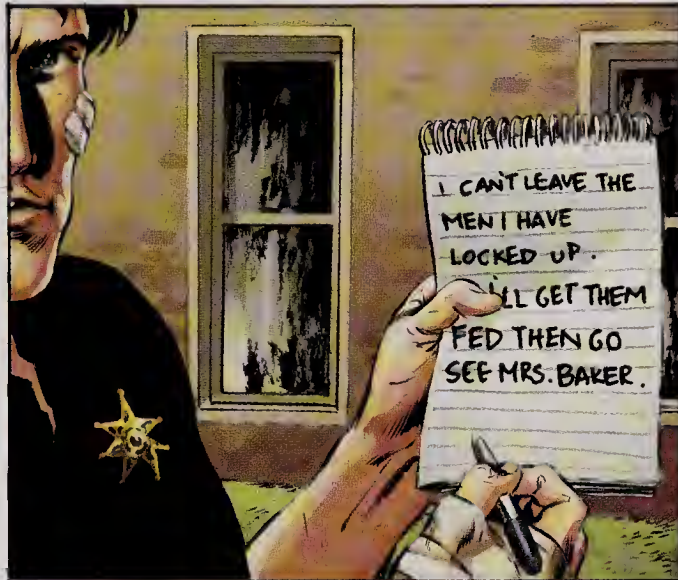
And you, Nick?
How do you feel?
A cold? Sneezing?
Coughing?

Nick shook his head
"no" to each one.



Will you
try to leave
town?

I think you
could, if you
went by the
fields.



You're a
thoughtful boy;
that's rare.

A boy in this
degraded age who
has a sense of
responsibility is
even rarer...

You'll be
careful of those
three you have
locked up, won't
you?



Nick nodded soberly.

When he got back to the jail
with breakfast, both Billy and
Mike looked badly frightened
and Vince Hogan was delirious
with a fever.

By six o'clock that
evening, he would
be dead.



NEW YORK.
THE APARTMENT OF
ALICE UNDERWOOD.

KERASHH!

MOM?

Larry had tried calling his mother; there'd been no answer.

From behind her apartment's locked door, he'd heard a groan.

Mom, where are you?

Now a louder groan, coming from--

Jesus, Mom!

Alice Underwood was lying on the floor, half in and half out of her bedroom.

Her breathing was ragged, clogged with phlegm.

Larry?

Going to put you on your bed, Mom--

The heat Alice's body was giving off terrified Larry.

No one could remain so hot and live, he thought. Her brains must be frying in her head.

Larry, go get your father--
He's in the bar with that photographer--

Outside, thunder was rumbling and rain was splattering the windows.

KRA-KOON!!

Inside--

YOU GO
TELL YOUR DAD
I SAID COME
HOME!!

Inside, Larry was dialing
Mercy Hospital--

Come
on, come
on...

From his mother's bedroom,
a scream that chilled his blood:

LAR-REEEEEE!

The phone rang three times,
there was a buzzing sound,
then a click.

Then a bright,
mechanical voice:

You have
reached Mercy
General Hospital.
Right now, all of our
circuits are busy. If
you will hold, your
call will be taken as
soon as possible.
Thank you.

Damn--

Should he call a private
ambulance? Or see if Mr.
Freeman, Alice's downstairs
neighbor, would watch her
while he went to the hospital
himself?

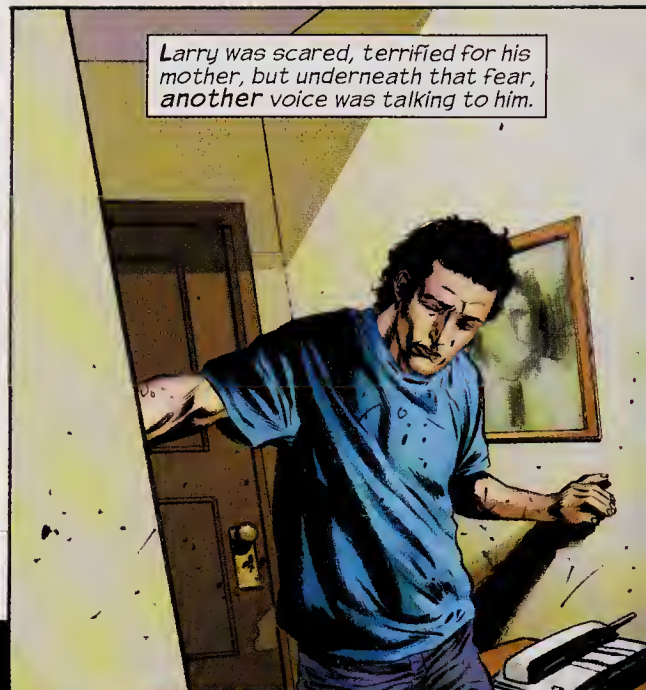


Mr. Freeman--

He'd start there--

Mom, listen to me, I'll be back--

I'm going to go to the hospital--



Larry was scared, terrified for his mother, but underneath that fear, another voice was talking to him.

Asking questions like:

Why do these things always happen to me? Why now, when I was finally turning it around?

And most despicable of all:

How bad is Mom going to screw up my plans? How much of my life am I going to have to change around to deal with her mess?



Larry hated that voice-- that part of himself--and wished it would die a quick, nasty death.

But it was still going strong as he knocked on Mr. Freeman's door--

Mr. Freeman?
It's Larry Underwood,
Alice's boy?

Mr. Freeman,
if you're there,
I need your
help!



Knocking that echoed like thunder...

KRA-KOOM!

OGUNQUIT, MAINE.

Daddy?
What is it?
Is it Mom?

THE HARBORSIDE INN.

Fran...

Frannie...

Responsibility is a pie, Frannie thought. And some of it would have to be hers. It wasn't just the charity work that made Carla Goldsmith sick.

Is
Mom all
right?

Tell me,
Daddy!

She got worse, about an hour
after we talked. Her fever went
up, she started to rave...

I called the Sanford
Hospital, and they said
that their ambulances
were out on calls, both
of them, but that they
would add Carla
to their list...

KRA-KOW!

List? Since when do ambulances have waiting lists?


They finally came about fifteen minutes ago. And there were *six* people in the back of that ambulance...

Your mother...came out of it a little as they put her in, and she kept saying, "I can't catch my breath, Peter, why can't I breathe...?"

Christ, Frannie...

What's happening?

Daddy...

A man in a dark jacket and a woman in a yellow jacket are embracing in front of a house at night. The man is looking down at the woman, who has her eyes closed. The house has a wooden door with a diamond-patterned glass pane. The scene is dimly lit, with some light coming from the door and the surrounding environment.


Guilt gnawed at Frannie, furry bodies inside her belly--where that other thing was, her baby--and she began to cry.

Eat your pie, she told herself as she hugged her father.

It tastes terrible and bitter, but eat your pie.

Have seconds, have thirds.

Eat your pie, Frannie Goldsmith, eat every bite.

A street scene at night. In the foreground, there are several birds perched on a fence or railing. In the background, there is a large, multi-story house with a porch. The house has a dark roof and light-colored siding. The street is dark, and there are some trees and bushes in the background. The overall atmosphere is dark and somber.

In a kind of terrible, odd coincidence, Alice Underwood in New York, Carla Goldsmith in Maine, and Jane Baker (who had shown Nick Andros such kindness) in Shoyo would all three die the same day, mere hours apart.

PROJECT BLUE. STARKEY AND CREIGHTON:

The President called me. I've...been relieved, Len.

Of course I knew it was coming, but it still hurts like hell.

Jesus, Bill.

When this country ought to be getting on its knees to kiss your feet.

You're in charge now, Len. The President wants you in Washington as soon as you can get there. You're going to have to tell him...

It's out of control now. It's popped up in Oregon, Nebraska, Louisiana, Florida...

Yeah, tentative cases in Mexico and Chile, too.

The report just came in.

And we're getting exactly nowhere with Stuart Redman. Did you know we actually *injected* him with the Blue virus?

"He thought it was a sedative.

"His body killed the virus, and no one has the slightest idea how..."

My daughter gave me a book of poems some years ago, Len, by a man named Yeats...

He said that things fall apart. That the center doesn't always hold.

The end of one poem gave me goosebumps the first time I read it, and it still does:

"What rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

The beast is on its way, Len, and it's a good deal rougher than that fellow Yeats ever could have imagined.

Things *are* falling apart. The job--your job--is to hold as much as you can together for as long as you can.

Yes, sir.

Yes, Billy.

I have business to attend to.

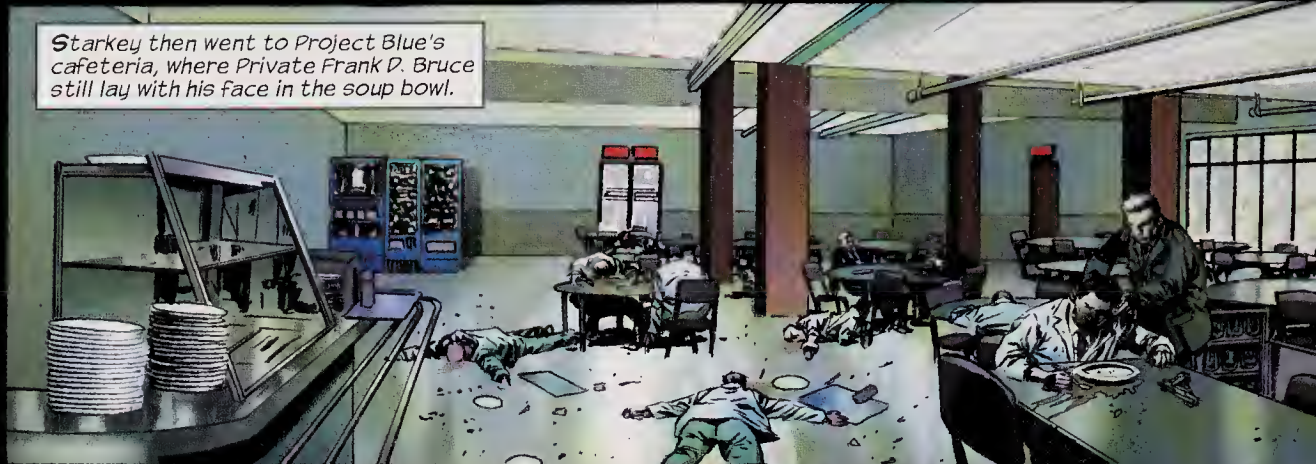
General Starkey slipped his West Point ring off his right hand and his wedding band off his left.

For my daughter Cindy. See that she gets them, Len.

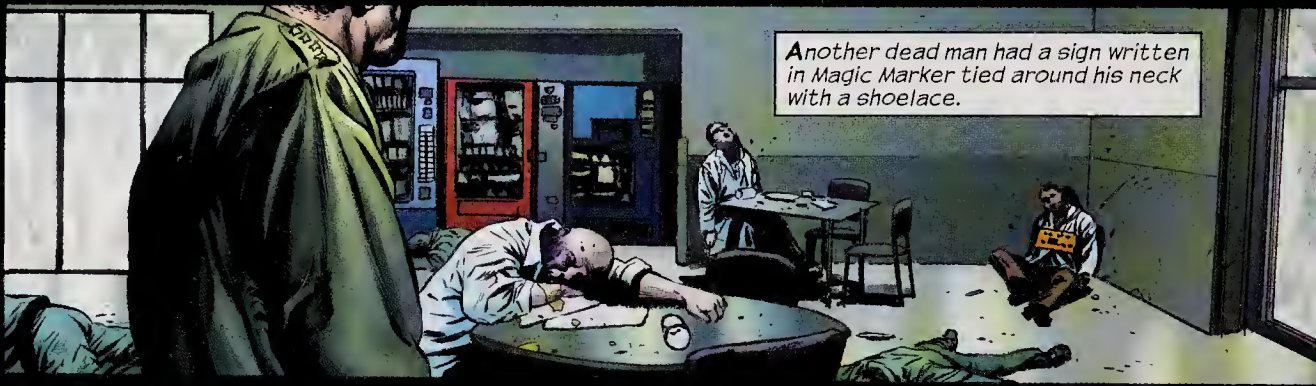
I will, sir.

Both men stood ramrod straight and saluted each other. Tears were streaming down Len Creighton's face.

Starkey then went to Project Blue's cafeteria, where Private Frank D. Bruce still lay with his face in the soup bowl.



Another dead man had a sign written in Magic Marker tied around his neck with a shoelace.



NOW YOU KNOW
IT WORKS.
ANY QUESTIONS?

Starkey was sobbing as he loosened the strap over the butt of his pistol and put its barrel into his mouth.

When the blast came, it was muffled and undramatic.

None of the corpses in the room of the dead took notice.

None of them told Starkey that he'd been right:

That the beast was coming...



MEANWHILE.

ELSEWHERE.



Randall Flagg, the dark man, strode south on U.S. 51.

It was an hour before dawn, and he was somewhere between Grasmere and Riddle, west of Twin Falls, still north of the Duck Valley Reservation that spreads across two states...



...and wasn't it a fine night?

chapter
FIVE



U.S. 51.

Randall Flagg was a man of no age, a man called the Walkin Dude, or sometimes the Boogeyman.

He wore faded, pegged jeans and a denim jacket--

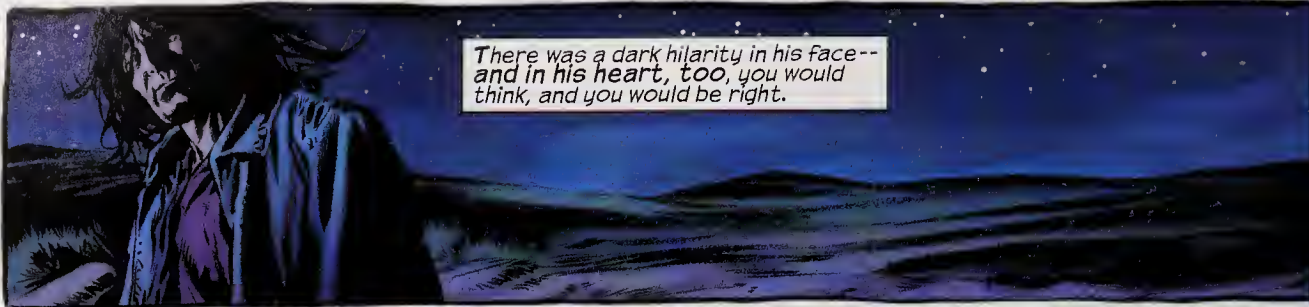
--with a button on each breast.

There was a Boy Scout knapsack over his shoulder, old and battered.

Stuffed, like his pockets, with fifty different kinds of conflicting literature-- pamphlets for all seasons, rhetoric for all reasons. When this man handed you a brochure, you took it no matter what the subject...

The dangers of atomic plants, the role played by the International Jewish Cartel in the overthrow of friendly governments, the C.I.A.-Contra-cocaine connection, the Blacks for Militant Equality, The Kode of the Klan...

Flagg had them all, and more, too.



*There was a dark hilarity in his face--
and in his heart, too, you would
think, and you would be right.*



*It was the face of a hatefully
happy man, a face that radiated
a horrible handsome warmth...*




*A face to make water glasses
shatter in the hands of hardened
truck-stop waitresses...*




*To make small children crash their
trikes into board fences and then
cower against their mothers...*




*Flagg was walking south,
listening to the night sounds
that pressed close on both
sides, the worn heels of his
sharp-toed cowboy boots
clipping on the pavement...*




If car lights showed on the horizon as he walked...




He would fade back and back, down over the soft shoulder into the high grass where the night bugs made their homes...



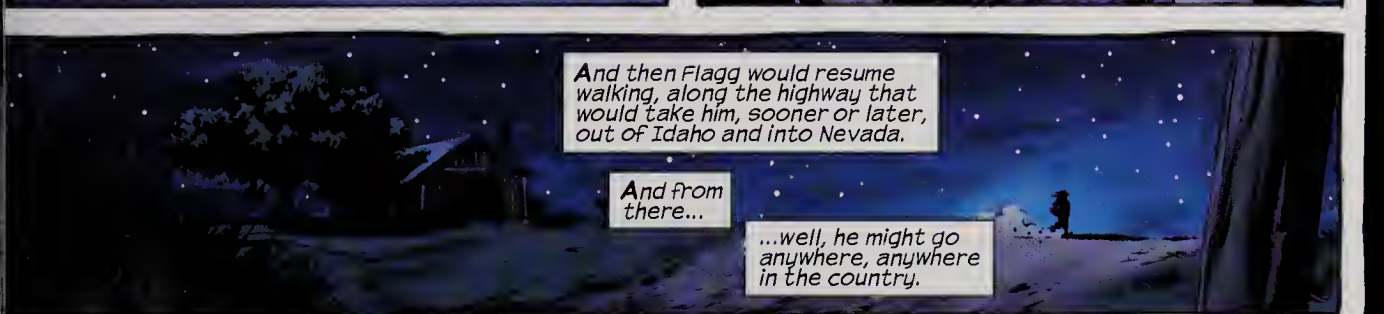
And the car would pass him...



And the driver would feel a slight chill, as if he had driven through an air pocket...



And his sleeping wife and child would stir uneasily, as if they'd been touched by a bad dream at the same instant...

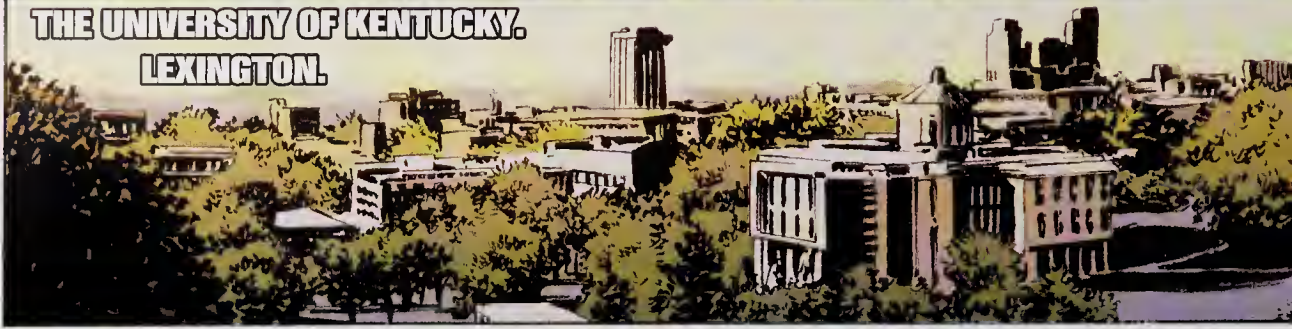


And then Flagg would resume walking, along the highway that would take him, sooner or later, out of Idaho and into Nevada.

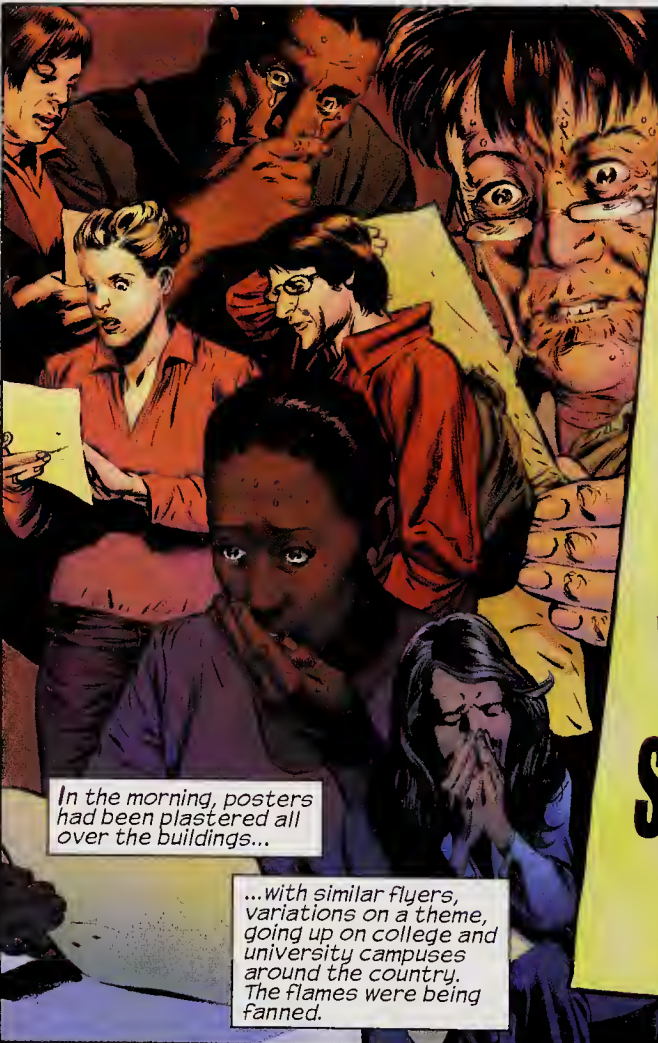
And from there...

...well, he might go anywhere, anywhere in the country.

THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY. LEXINGTON.



Some campus group, probably either Students for a Democratic Society or the Young Maoists, had been busy with a copy machine during the night.



In the morning, posters had been plastered all over the buildings...

...with similar flyers, variations on a theme, going up on college and university campuses around the country. The flames were being fanned.

ATTENTION! ATTENTION! ATTENTION!

YOU ARE BEING LIED TO! THE GOVERNMENT IS LYING TO YOU! THE PRESS IS LYING TO YOU! THE ADMINISTRATION IS LYING TO YOU!

THERE IS NO SUPERFLU VACCINE!

**SUPERFLU IS NOT A
SERIOUS DISEASE, IT IS
A DEADLY DISEASE.**

SUPERFLU WAS DEVELOPED BY THE FORCES OF THE U.S. PIG PARAMILITARY WHO ARE NOW COVERING UP THEIR MURDEROUS BLUNDER EVEN IF IT MEANS 75% OF THE POPULATION WILL DIE!

MEETING IN GYM AT 7:00 PM!

STRIKE! STRIKE! STRIKE! STRIKE! STRIKE!



Flagg would spend the entire night walking, walking and smiling...

BOSTON.

What happened at WBZ-TV had been planned the night before by three newscasters and six technicians.

Five of the men played poker regularly and six of the nine were already ill.

They had felt they had nothing to lose, beginning with morning news anchor Bob Palmer:

Fellow citizens of Boston, and Americans in our broadcast area. Something both grave and terribly important has just happened in this studio, and I am very glad it happened here first, in Boston, the cradle of American independence.

At 9:01 am, just after Palmer had begun to read the soothing copy he had been handed by an army noncom, a coup took place.

For the last seven days, this broadcast facility has been under guard by men purporting to be National Guardsmen.

The nine "rebels," all long-timers at WBZ-TV, armed with guns they'd snuck in, took the television station back from the soldiers, who hadn't expected any trouble from a soft bunch of civilians.

Has the news been managed? I am sorry to say that this is the case.

For the last week, I have been given false copy and forced to read it, almost literally with a gun to my head.

But we here, who have just liberated our own station, have some footage that wasn't confiscated or destroyed.

Taken clandestinely, of poor quality, yet we think you *must* see it...



What followed next was grainy, jittery footage of a truck, at the edge of a pier, jutting out over Boston Harbor.



Bodies were cascading out of the truck into the harbor: women, old men, children, nurses, police.

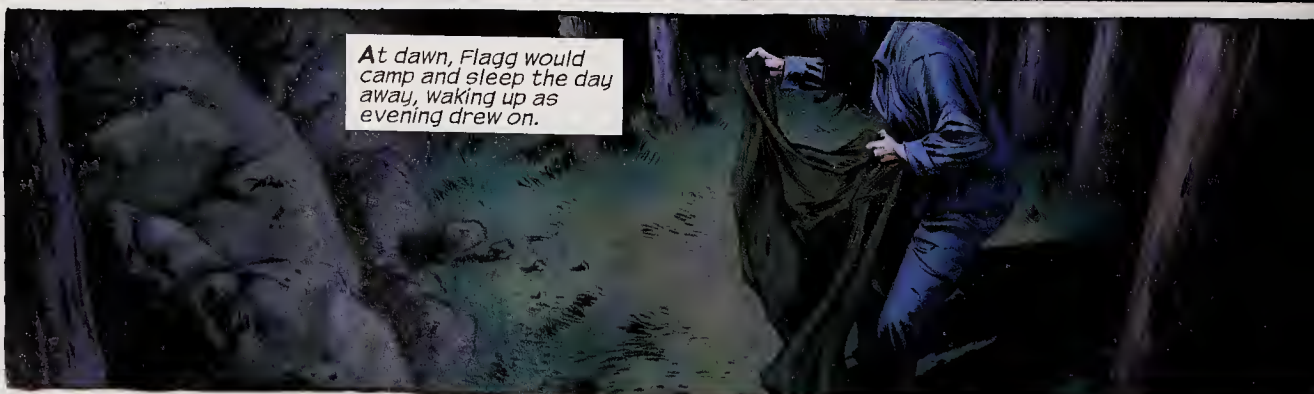



Tumbling in a cartwheeling flood that never seemed to end.



At some point during the film clip, it became clear that soldiers were using pitchforks to get the bodies off the truck.

At dawn, Flagg would camp and sleep the day away, waking up as evening drew on.






He would read as his
supper cooked over
a small, smokeless
campfire.


Words from some battered
and coverless paperback porno
novel, or maybe *Mein Kampf*,
or an R. Crumb comic book.

When it came to the
printed word, Flagg was
an equal opportunity
reader.



After supper, he would
commence walking again,
cutting through this
godforsaken wilderness,
watching and smelling and
listening as the climate
grew more arid...

...and the mountains
began to poke out of
the earth like dinosaur
spines.

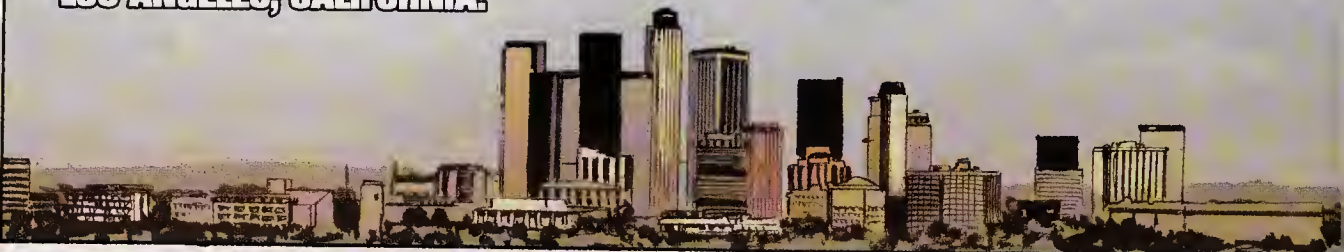


The country was a body
politic with its network of
roads embedded in its skin
like marvelous capillaries,
ready to take him, a dark
speck of foreign matter,
anywhere or everywhere--
heart, liver, brain.

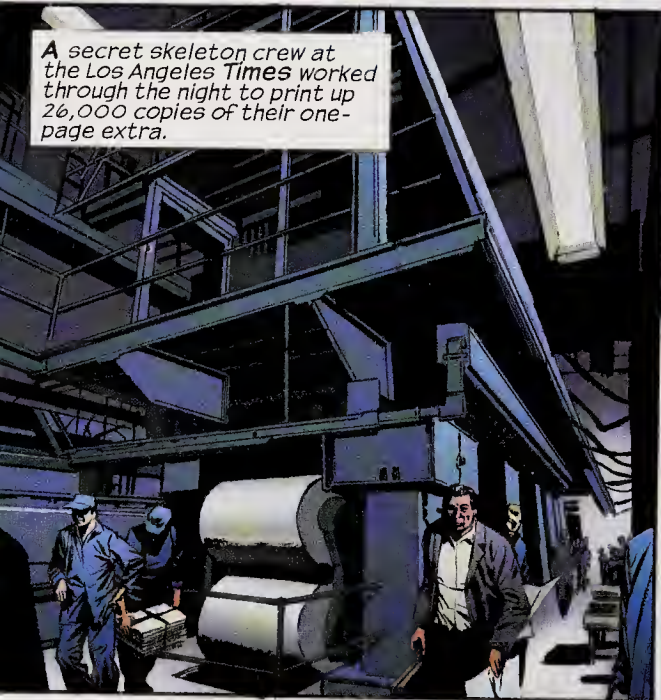
He was a clot waiting
to happen, a splinter
of bone hunting a soft
organ to puncture...

...a lonely lunatic cell looking
for a mate with which to raise
a cozy little malignant tumor.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.



A secret skeleton crew at
the Los Angeles Times worked
through the night to print up
26,000 copies of their one-
page extra.



Its headline, printed in
36-point-type, screamed:



WEST COAST IN GRIP OF PLAGUE EPIDEMIC

**Thousands Flee
Deadly Superflu,
Government
Coverup Certain.**

The President is scheduled to address
the nation tonight at 6:00 PST, allegedly
from the Oval Office...



Advance copies of the President's speech indicate he will "spank" the American people for overreacting, and compare the current panic to that which followed Orson Welles's "War of the Worlds" radio broadcast.

The *Times* has four questions it wishes the President would answer in his speech.

Why has the *Times* been enjoined from printing the news by thugs in army uniforms, in direct violation of its Constitutional right to do so?

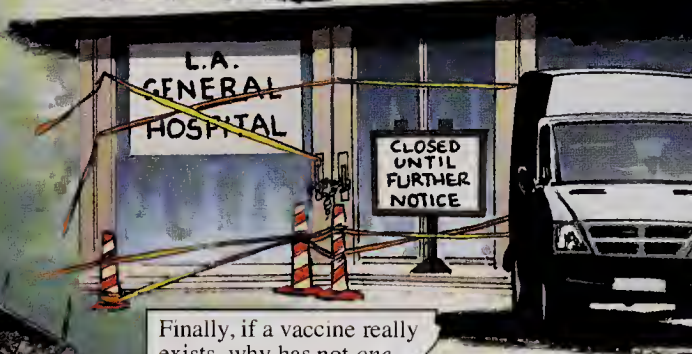
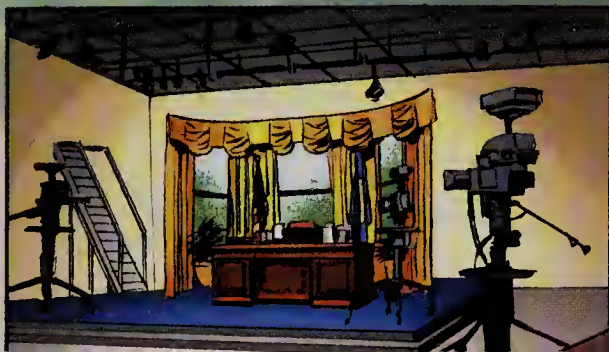
Why have the following highways—U.S. 5, U.S. 10, and U.S. 15—been blocked off by armored cars and troop carriers?


If this is a "minor outbreak of flu," then why are barge-trains being towed out into the Pacific and dumped?

And do these barges contain the dead bodies of plague victims?

Finally, if a vaccine really exists, why has not one clinic been set up to administer flu shots?

We call upon the president to answer these questions in his speech and to end these police-state tactics and this insane effort to cover up the truth.





*Flagg was known, well known,
along the highways in hiding
that are traveled by the poor
and the mad...*


DULUTH, MINNESOTA.

PIEDMONT AVENUE.




TIME OF THE
DISAPPEARANCE
IS HERE
PREPARE TO
MEET YOUR
GOD!

*By the professional revolutionaries
and those who have been taught to
hate so well that their hate shows
on their faces like harelips...*




BEHOLD THE
HEARTS OF THE
SINNERS
WERE BROKEN
THE EVIL DAYS
ARE AT HAND.

*By the people unwanted except
by others like them, squatting in
cheap rooms with slogans and
posters on the walls, in basements
where lengths of sawed-off pipe are
stuffed with high explosives...*




Flagg was always welcome in the back rooms where lunatic plans were laid:

To kill a Cabinet member, to kidnap the child of a visiting dignitary, to break into the boardroom meeting of an oil company with grenades.




And when he joined a meeting, everything stopped...


It was as if he'd shown up with some old and terrible engine of destruction, some infernal gift, a birthday cake with nitroglycerine candles.



Then the talk would begin again, but it would be rational and disciplined--as rational and disciplined as madmen could manage--and things would be agreed upon.



As for the women he went to bed with...



When it was done, they were cold, so cold, it seemed impossible that they could ever be warm again.

SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI.

The highest-rated morning show in the city was KLFT's morning call-in show, "Speak Your Piece," with Ray Flowers.



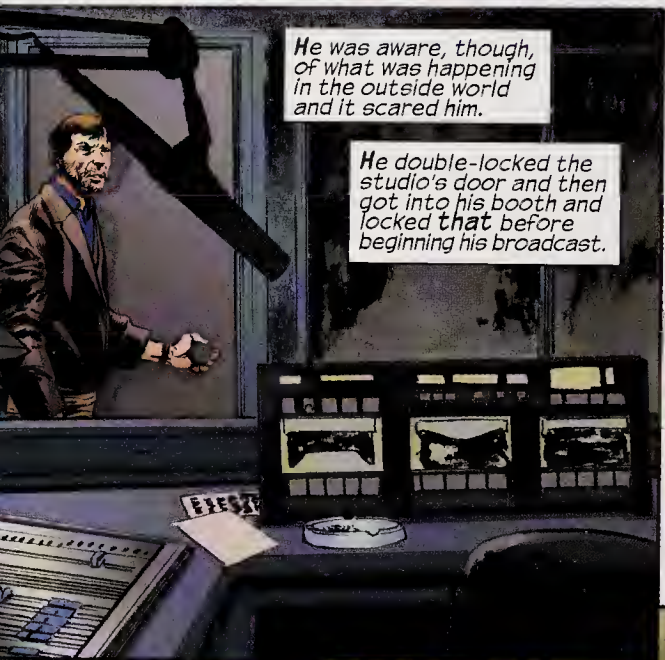
Who was, on the morning of June 26, the only KLFT employee to show up for work.

Everyone else had gotten or was getting sick, but Ray, himself, felt fine.



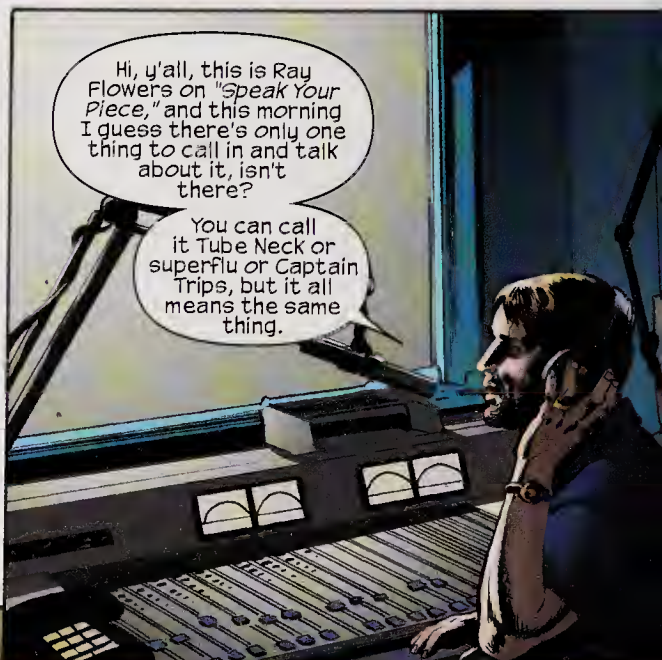
He was aware, though, of what was happening in the outside world and it scared him.

He double-locked the studio's door and then got into his booth and locked that before beginning his broadcast.



Hi, y'all, this is Ray Flowers on "Speak Your Piece," and this morning I guess there's only one thing to call in and talk about it, isn't there?

You can call it Tube Neck or Superflu or Captain Trips, but it all means the same thing.



CARTHAGE, MISSOURI.

Now I've heard horror stories about the army clamping down on everything, so if you want to talk about that, I'm willing to listen.

It's still a free country, right?



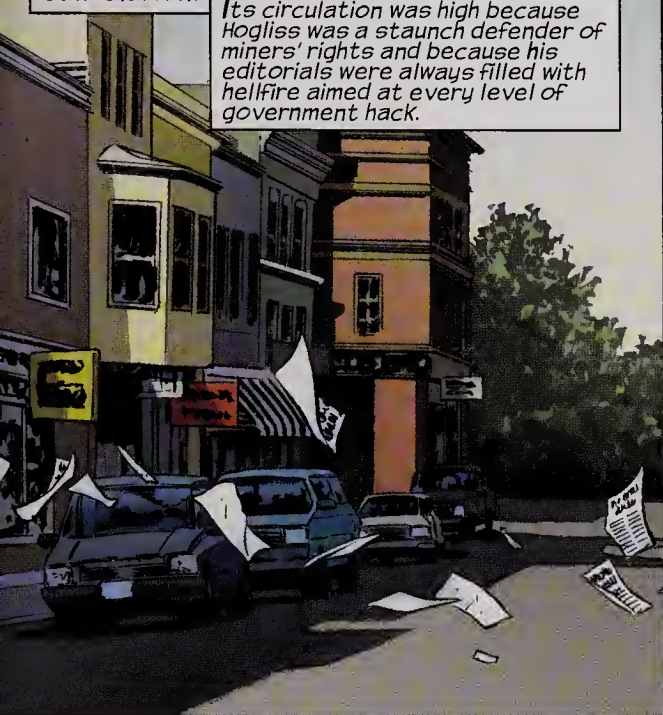
Our toll-free numbers are 555-8600 and 555-8601, and if you get a busy signal, call back. It's just me here, doing it all myself.



DURBIN, WEST VIRGINIA.

Retired lawyer James D. Hogliss was the editor and publisher of the weekly newspaper the Durbin Call-Clarion.

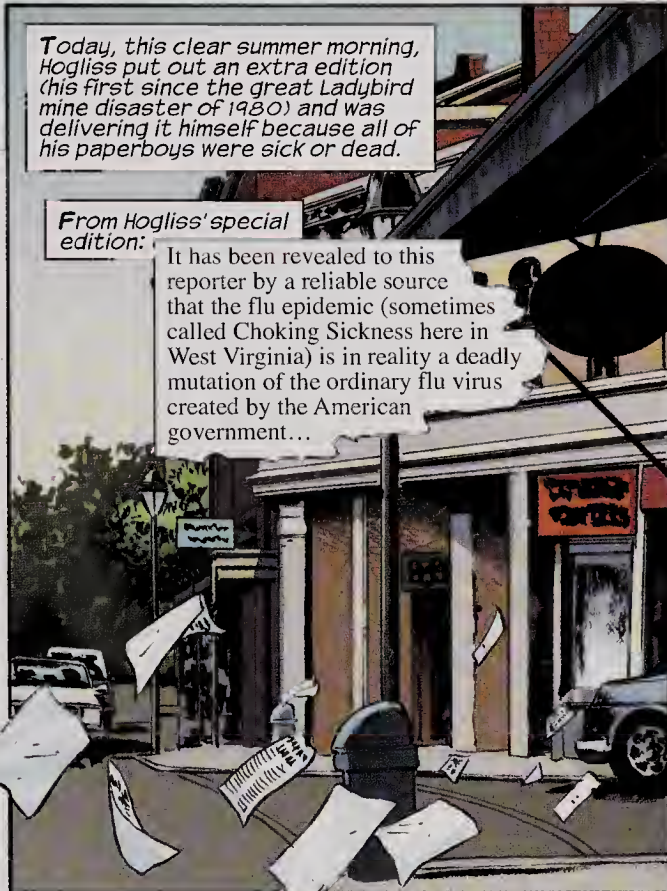
Its circulation was high because Hogliss was a staunch defender of miners' rights and because his editorials were always filled with hellfire aimed at every level of government hack.



Today, this clear summer morning, Hogliss put out an extra edition (his first since the great Ladybird mine disaster of 1980) and was delivering it himself because all of his paperboys were sick or dead.

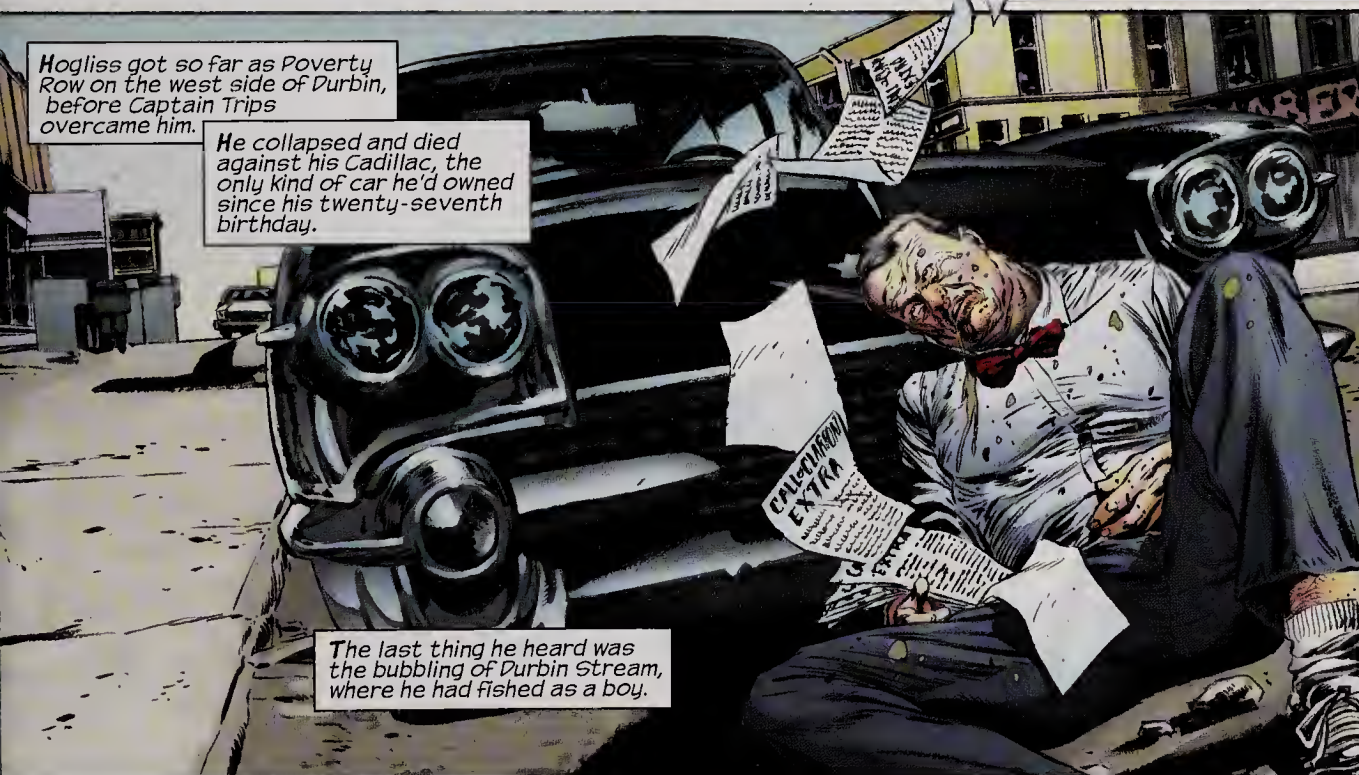
From Hogliss' special edition:

It has been revealed to this reporter by a reliable source that the flu epidemic (sometimes called Choking Sickness here in West Virginia) is in reality a deadly mutation of the ordinary flu virus created by the American government...



Hogliss got so far as Poverty Row on the west side of Durbin, before Captain Trips overcame him.

He collapsed and died against his Cadillac, the only kind of car he'd owned since his twenty-seventh birthday.



The last thing he heard was the bubbling of Durbin Stream, where he had fished as a boy.

Promises of a soon-forthcoming vaccine are a bald-faced lie. No vaccine has yet been developed...

Citizens, this is more than a disaster or a tragedy; it is the end of all hope in our government. If we have, indeed, done such a thing to ourselves, then...

Of all the stories circulating about the superflu, Hogliss' was the most accurate, as his source had been an army major with dark, haunted eyes who had been transferred to Wheeling from someplace top secret in California called 'Project Blue.'

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

SOMEPLACE THAT **LOOKS**
LIKE THE OVAL OFFICE.

My fellow
Americans, as the
great nation that we
are, we cannot afford
to jump at shadows like
small children in a dark
room; but neither can
we take this serious
outbreak of influenza
lightly...

If you feel ill,
I urge you to stay
at home, stay in bed,
take aspirin, and
drink plenty of
liquids...

NEW YORK.
THE APARTMENT OF
ALICE UNDERWOOD.

"Be confident that
you will feel better in
a week *at most*..."

OGUNQUIT, MAINE.
THE GOLDSMITH HOME.

"There is no truth--
no truth-- to the
rumor that this strain
of flu is fatal.

I love you,
Daddy...Frannie
loves you...

Be...be at
peace...

SHOYO, ARKANSAS.

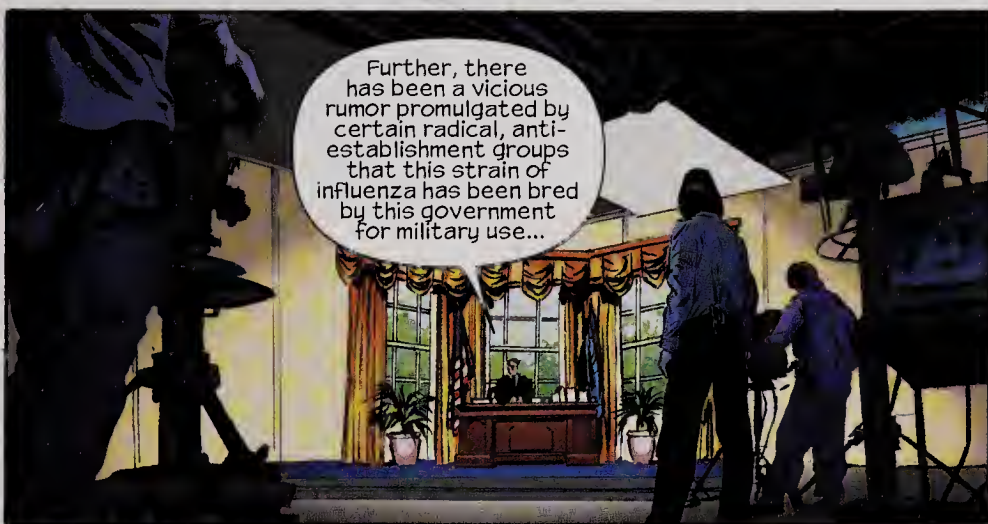
NICK ANDROS CARRYING
JANE BAKER.

"In the greatest majority
of cases, those afflicted
can expect a complete
and utter recovery..."



~cough~

~cough~



Further, there has been a vicious rumor promulgated by certain radical, anti-establishment groups that this strain of influenza has been bred by this government for military use...

STOVINGTON, VT.

"This is a flat-out falsehood. This country signed the revised Geneva Accords on poison gas, nerve gas, and germ warfare in good conscience and good faith..."



We have not now nor have we ever--

~sip~

--we have never been a party to the clandestine manufacture of substances outlawed by the Geneva Convention.



BOSTON.

"This is only a *moderately* serious outbreak of influenza, no more and no less..."

"We ask you to remain calm and secure in the knowledge that a flu vaccine will be available next week for those not already on the mend..."





National Guardsmen have been called out in some areas to *protect* the populace against hooligans, vandals and scare-mongers...

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY.

Two thousand students on the Lexington campus, riled up by the flyers, organized an impromptu rally.

Police were called in to "contain" the "rioters."

When the "turkey shoot," as one witness described it, was finally over, eighty students had been mowed down by gunfire.

But there is no truth to the rumors that some cities have been "occupied" by regular forces or that the news has been "managed"...



BOSTON.

Bob Palmer and his crew broadcast for two hours...

KA-THOOM!

...until somebody on the ground floor realized that they didn't have to re-take the sixth floor to stop the transmission.

That twenty pounds of plastique would do the trick just as well

LOS ANGELES.

The reprisal at the L.A. Times was swift and bloody.

The "official" F.B.I. story was that "radical revolutionaries" had dynamited the paper's presses, causing the deaths of twenty-eight workers.

When, in fact, the twenty-eight employees had been executed, one by one, by soldiers.

SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI.

It took the twenty-man patrol an hour to get to Springfield from Carthage.

In that hour, Ray Flowers took calls from a doctor who said people were dying like flies, a nurse who confirmed that bodies were being removed from her Kansas City hospital by the truckload, a delirious woman who blamed flying saucers from outer space, and a dozen others with their own stories to tell.

After the death squad broke through all of the locked doors, the last words Ray spoke on the air were: "I think they're going to shoot me--"

ATLANTA, GEORGIA.

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH.



Flagg rocked along, his feet easy in his boots, which were comfortably sprung in all the right places.

His feet and these boots were old lovers.

In Mountain City, Christopher Bradenton, who ran an underground railroad for fugitives and who was waiting for Flagg with a fresh set of papers and a clean car, knew him as Richard Fry.



In New York he'd been known as Richard Frand, and his claim that he was a black man had never been disputed, although his skin was very light.

He and a black veteran of the Vietnam war (with more than enough hatred in his heart to make up for his missing left leg) once killed six cops in a single night.

In Georgia he'd been Ramsey Forrest, and in his white sheet, he had participated in two rapes, a castration, and the burning of a shanty town...



That was a long time ago, the early sixties, the first civil rights surge...

Flagg sometimes thought he might have been born in that strife. Certainly he couldn't remember much that had happened before that...



...except that he came originally from Nebraska and he had attended high school classes with a red-haired, bandy-legged boy named Charles Starkweather.

The civil rights marches of 1960 and 1961 were clearer in his mind...

The beatings, the night rides, the churches that had exploded as if some miracle had grown too large to be contained within them...

In 1962, he drifted down to New Orleans and met a demented young man who was handing out tracts urging America to leave Cuba alone.

The man's last name, Flagg remembered, was Oswald, and he still had some of those tracts, crumpled in his knapsack.

Over the years, Flagg had walked in demonstrations against the same dozen companies on a hundred different colleges.

He wrote the questions that most discomfited those in power when they came to lecture, but he never asked the questions himself.

Likewise, he never spoke at rallies because the microphones would scream with hysterical feedback if he did, though he wrote the speeches for the speakers...

...and on several occasions, those speeches ended in riots and violent demonstrations.

For awhile in the early seventies he had been acquainted with a man named Donald DeFreeze...

(He was actually the person who suggested that DeFreeze take the name "Cinque.")

Flagg helped formulate the plans that resulted in DeFreeze's kidnapping of an heiress...

...and recommended that instead of simply ransoming the heiress, she should be driven insane.

He left the house in Los Angeles where DeFreeze and the others fled, moments before the police had moved in...

He skulked away, up the street, a fiery grin on his face...

When the few tattered remains of DeFreeze's group were swept up, they all mentioned that there had been someone else associated with the group, a hanger-on, but nevertheless someone important...

A man of no age, with no face, called the Walkin Dude, or sometimes the Boogeyman.

Flagg strode on at a steady, ground-eating pace. Two days ago, he had been in Laramie, Wyoming. Today he was on U.S. 51, between Grasmere and Riddle, on his way to Mountain City. Tomorrow he would be somewhere else.

And he was happier than he'd ever been, because--

He stopped--

Because something
was coming.

He could taste it, a hot,
sooty taste, as if God were
planning a cookout, and all
of civilization was going to
be the barbecue.

He had been born when
times changed, and the
times were about to
change again.

It was in the wind,
in the wind of this
soft Idaho evening.

He knew it was
almost time to
be reborn...

...else, why could he
suddenly do magic?



Flagg felt the first inches of dawn stain the sky...



...and lowered himself back down to the ground.

The time was not yet.



He began to walk again, grinning, now looking for a place to lay up for the day.

The time, the time of his transfiguration, was soon...

...and that was enough for now.



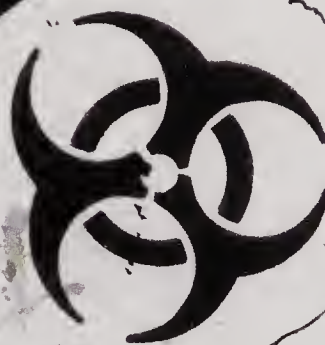
END BOOK ONE

STEPHEN KING THE STAND



WARNING

BIOLOGICAL
HAZARD
AUTHORIZED
PERSONNEL ONLY



AGUIRRE-SACASA

PERKINS

MARTIN

BERMEJO

MARVEL

SKETCHBOOK

THE STAND SKETCHBOOK

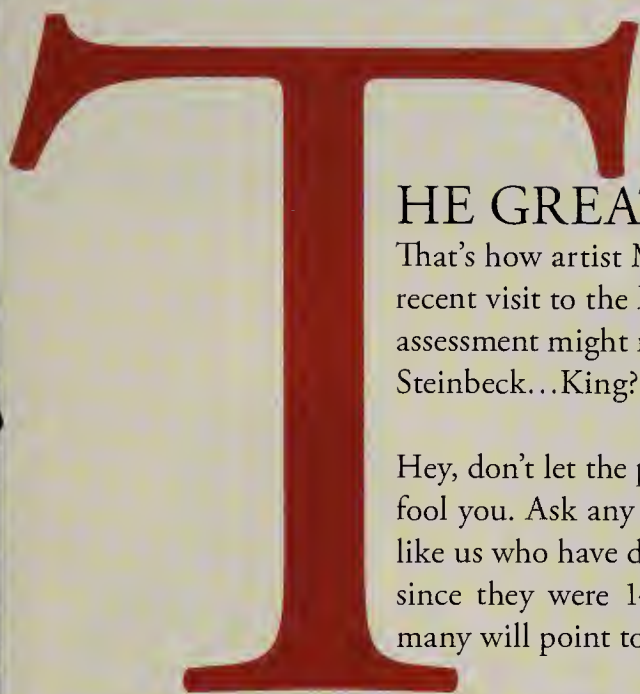


Featuring the artwork of
MIKE PERKINS & LEE BERMEJO
and commentary by
**MIKE PERKINS, LEE BERMEJO &
ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA**

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Special thanks to Chuck Verrill & Stephen King

Editor in Chief: Joe Quesada
Publisher: Dan Buckley



T

HE GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL.

That's how artist Mike Perkins described *The Stand* during a recent visit to the Marvel offices. I can just imagine how that assessment might make some snooty critics smirk. Fitzgerald, Steinbeck...King?

Hey, don't let the plague-ravaged corpses and snarling wolves fool you. Ask any Constant Reader (you know, those people like us who have devoured Uncle Stevie's wicked concoctions since they were 14) which is their favorite King book and many will point to this 1,000+ page saga.

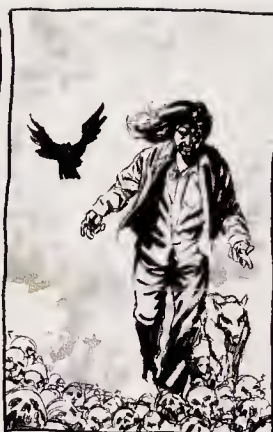
Why? Could be the goose bumps one gets just thinking about the unholy entity known as the Walkin' Dude. Perhaps it's the horrifyingly real post-apocalyptic setting of the sprawling, good vs. evil quest. Or just maybe because *The Stand* is a larger-than-life adventure that deals with larger-than-life concepts.

Faith ... Fear ... Violence ... Hope ... Religion ... Justice ... Sex ... Destiny ... Redemption ... all played out in a Revelations-soaked wild West. You tell me if those aren't the obsessions of America — not to mention the ingredients of the Great American Novel.

Still not convinced? Just take a look into the faces of the character designs in this sketchbook, read the creator commentary, and you'll see the respect and passion that Perkins, writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa and cover artist Lee Bermejo bring with them as they invite you to join them on a harrowing journey into Armageddon itself.

Happy trails, Constant Reader ... oh, and do something about that cold you got there ... sounds like a doozy.

— Bill Rosemann, editor



PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK BY MIKE PERKINS

From Mike Perkins: Flagg is such a prominent presence in *The Stand* that with just a single image of him you can encapsulate the whole book. That's what I was going for here. It came pretty much as a whole into my head and Joe Q suggested making the skull in the foreground a lot larger as it's such a primal image.

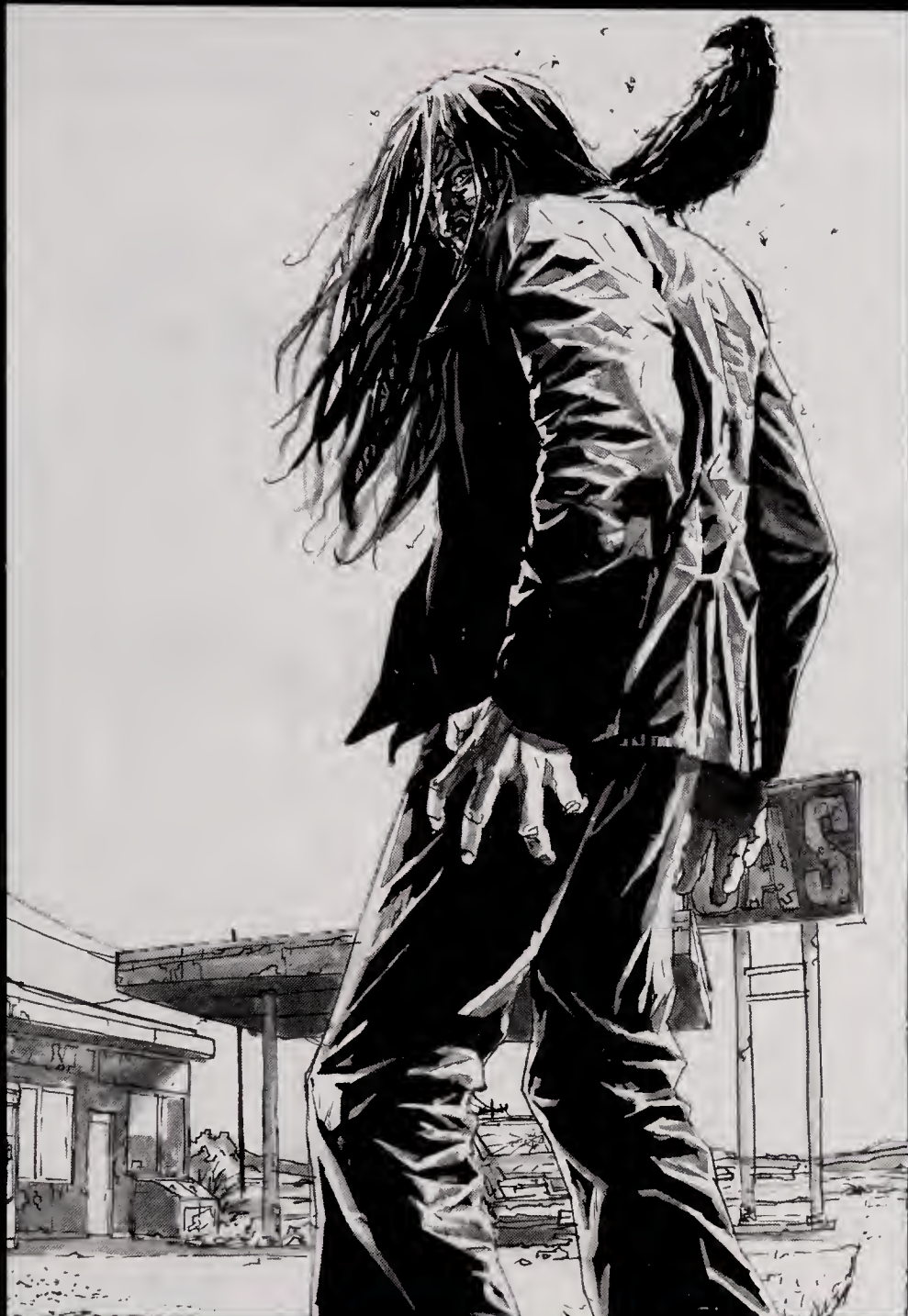


Color Art by Laura Martin



ISSUE #1 VARIANT COVER
PENCILS & INKS BY MIKE PERKINS





ISSUE #1 COVER SKETCH OPTION BY LEE BERMEJO

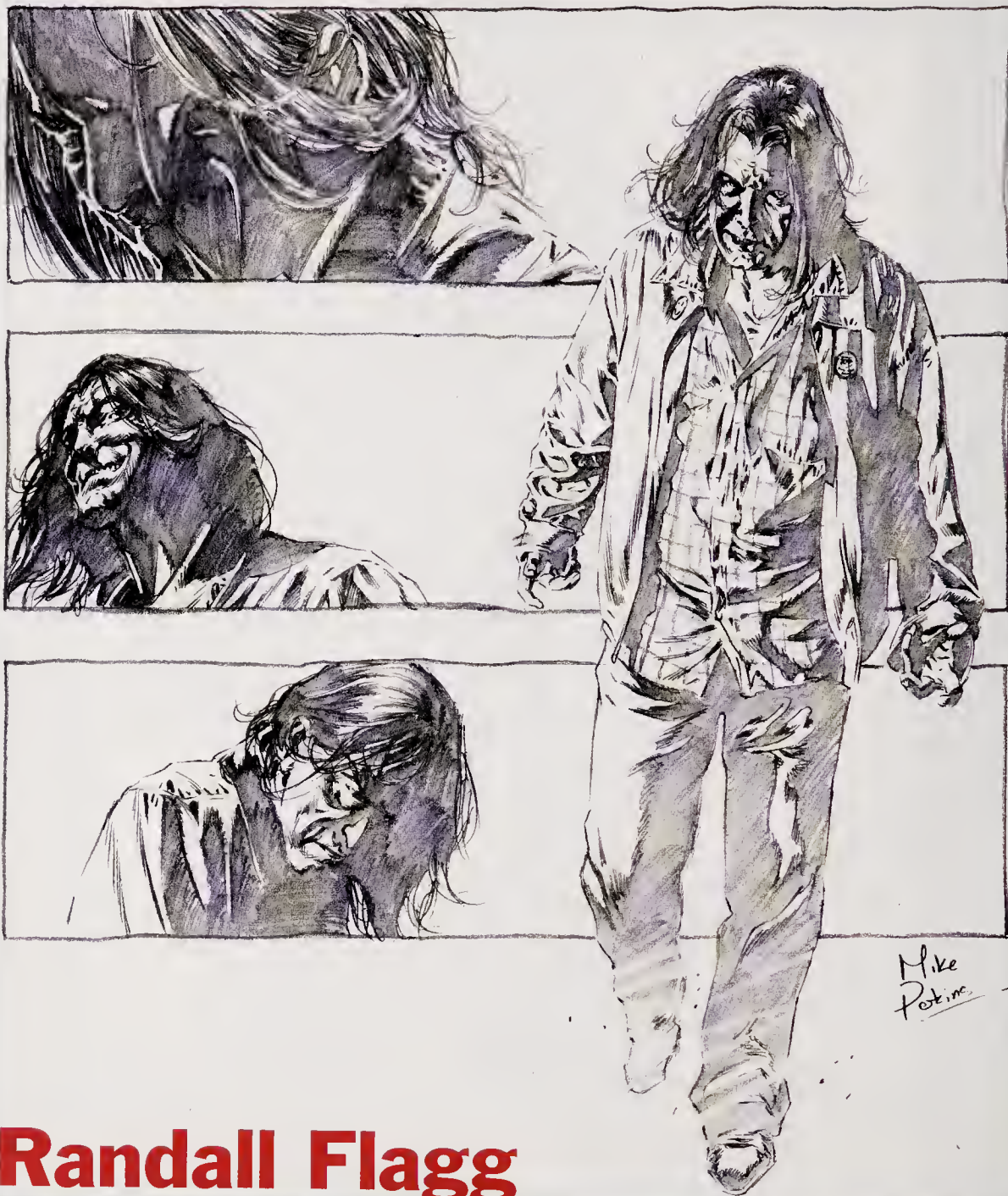
From Lee Bermejo: Something wicked this way comes. The first cover image of *The Stand* had to convey that in spades. Since Flagg is the physical embodiment of that concept, it was challenging to try and keep him iconic while still giving him a look, walk, and attitude that would send chills down your spine. I also liked the idea that there would be something simple and normal yet obviously “off” about the image as a whole ... something unsettling.

While drawing this sketch, I couldn't help but keep thinking about what was going to happen in that gas station ... what was in that car. It got to my nerves a little.

Then I started coughing ... true story.



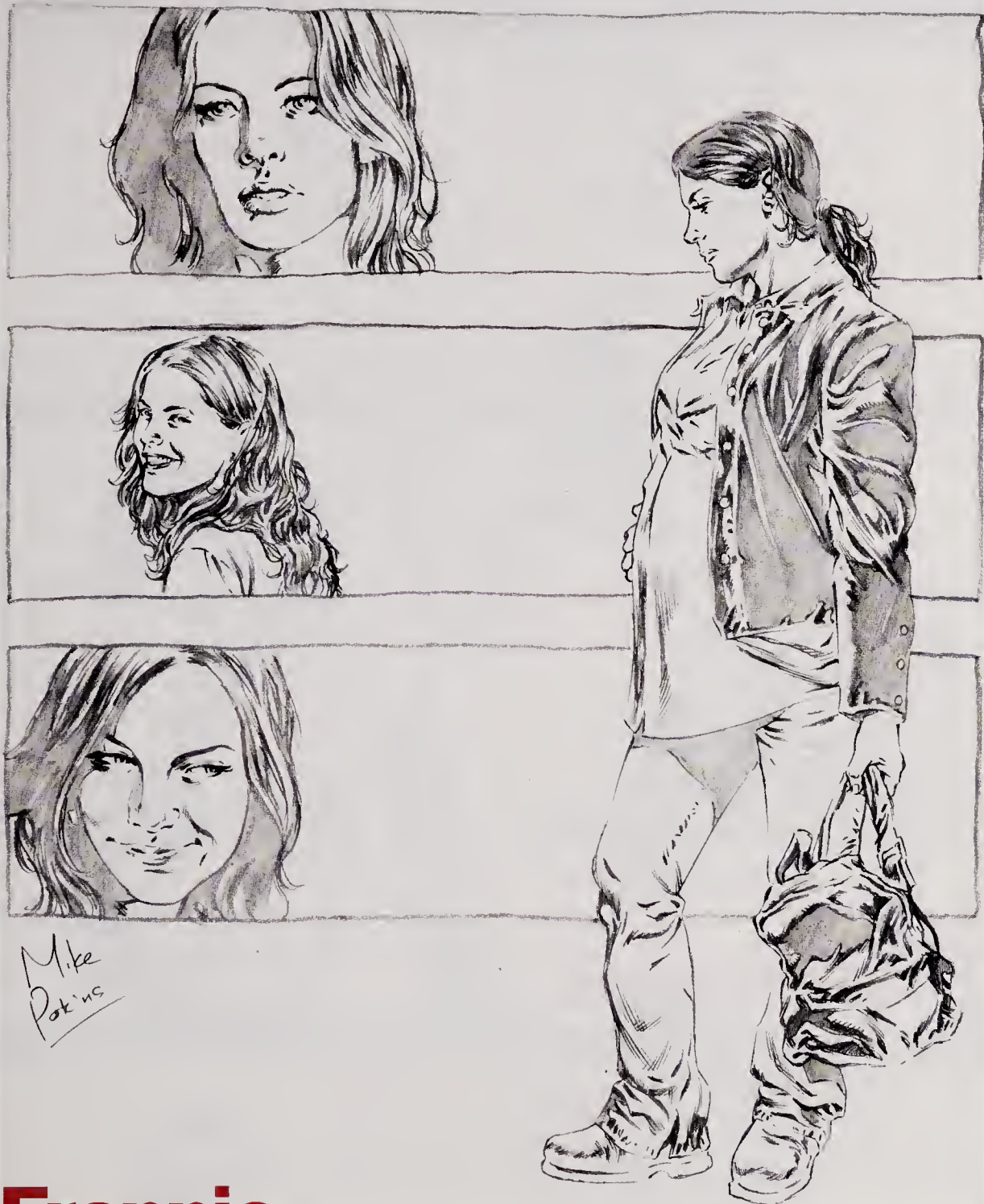
CHARACTER STUDIES BY MIKE PERKINS



Randall Flagg

ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA ON RANDALL FLAGG: The man of nightmares. Or, put another way, our nightmares given human (more or less) form. The dark side of the American Dream. Versions of him appear in more than a few of Stephen King's novels; besides *The Stand*, Flagg haunts King's *Dark Tower* series, *Eyes of the Dragon*, and maybe even *Hearts in Atlantis*. But the most terrifying incarnation of R.F. appears in *The Stand*. King's "Walkin' Dude" may not be the Devil, himself, as Mother Abigail says, but he comes pretty damn close ...

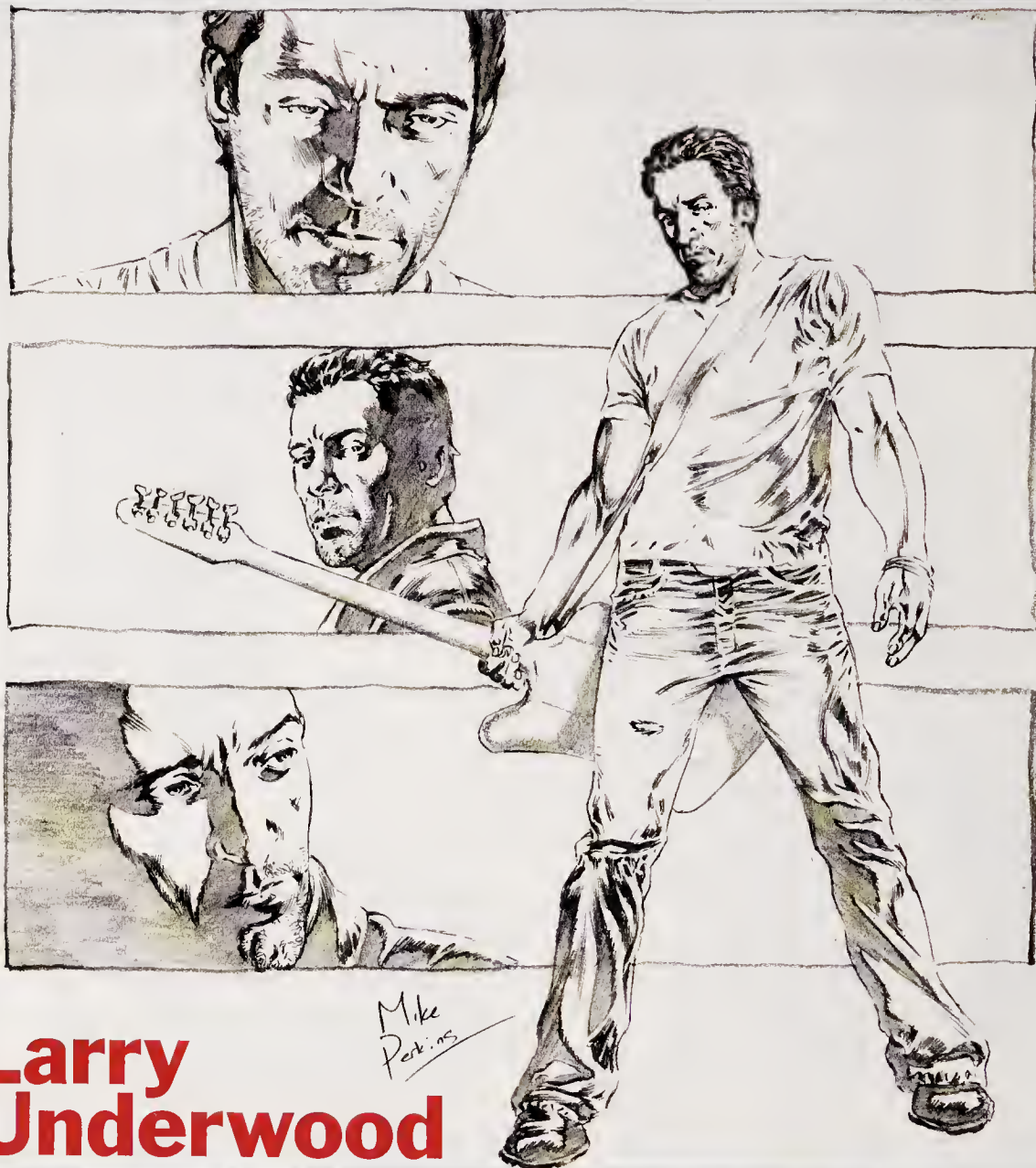
M.P. ON RANDALL FLAGG: I felt that Flagg needed to be designed less as a man — more as a force of nature. His hair will obscure his features, his face will be almost always in heavy shadow. This is the creature lurking under your bed, in your wardrobe, in your nightmares. Slightly familiar but wholly terrifying.



Frannie

R.A.S. ON FRANNIE. My favorite character in the novel. I didn't give Mike Perkins much art direction in terms of how he should draw our characters — for that, there's always the original novel to refer to, and anyway, Mike's a genius — but for Frannie, I *did* write: "We have to fall in love with her immediately." Which, of course, we do. Just like Harold Lauder and Stuart Redman do.

M.P. ON FRANNIE: Aaah, dear Frannie. Just following the descriptions right there in the book, you know you have to fall in love with her. She has to have that glint of fun and mischief in her eyes but also the determination to be a strong survivor ... and not just for herself.



Larry Underwood

R.A.S. ON LARRY UNDERWOOD. Stephen King's novels and stories frequently feature artists as heroes or anti-heroes. Usually, for obvious reasons, these artists are writers; Thad Beaumont in *The Dark Half* and Ben Mears in *Salem's Lot* immediately spring to mind, but the list goes on and on. In *The Stand*, we have singer/songwriter Larry Underwood, on the brink of stardom when the super-flu hits, which — to me — is Larry in a nutshell: Wrong place, wrong time.

What I like best about Mr. Underwood (note his last name, pun fully intended, I'm sure) is that, at the start of *The Stand*, everyone has basically given up on him — including Larry, himself — and that somehow, as unlikely as it seems, he *does* go through what his mother describes as a “change of soul.” What makes Stephen King such a brilliant writer is that for quite a long while, you're not entirely sure which side Larry's gonna end up on: Good or evil.

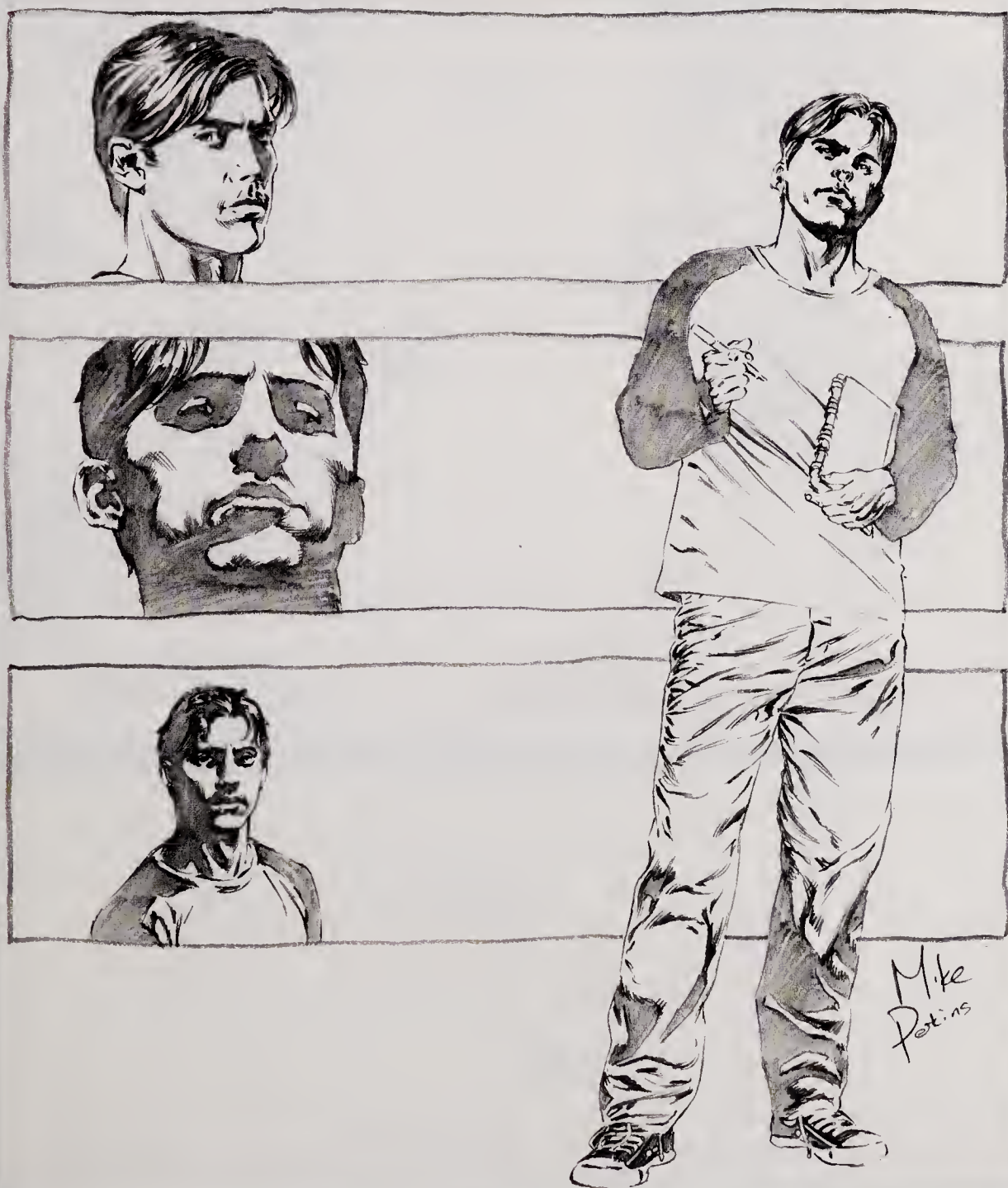
He also happens to be a key player in one of the novel's most terrifying set pieces: His and Rita's escape from Manhattan via a corpse-choked Lincoln Tunnel.

M.P. ON LARRY UNDERWOOD: My favorite character in the book. Larry has to represent both what we would like to be and what we hope we never turn into. He should be recognizable as “the rock star” but tries to hide the fact. There should be a darkness to him — a darkness he truly wishes to overcome within himself.

Nick Andros

R.A.S. ON NICK ANDROS. Only Stephen King would decide that the leader of his ragtag group of heroes should be a twenty-two-year-old drifter who can't speak and can't hear, which — when you think about it — makes a kind of perfect sense: Nick speaks no evil and he hears no evil. (And, after his second encounter with Ray Booth almost leaves him blind, he very nearly *sees* no evil.) Selected by someone — Mother Abigail? God? — to lead half of the country's survivors against the forces of darkness, it's going to take everything in Nick's doubting soul to rally his people for their final stand against Ultimate Evil...

M.P. ON NICK ANDROS: A truly heroic soul. Nick needs to be young enough to have not found himself truly but old enough in his soul to know his true worth.





Trashcan Man

R.A.S. ON TRASHCAN MAN. A classic Stephen King misfit. A pyromaniac for whom the end of the world means nothing more than: "I can blow up as many things as I want, and set as many fires as I want, and there's no one around to stop me, or punish me, or make fun of me." (At least until Flagg beckons Trash towards Las Vegas, towards some "great work" or other, in the desert.)

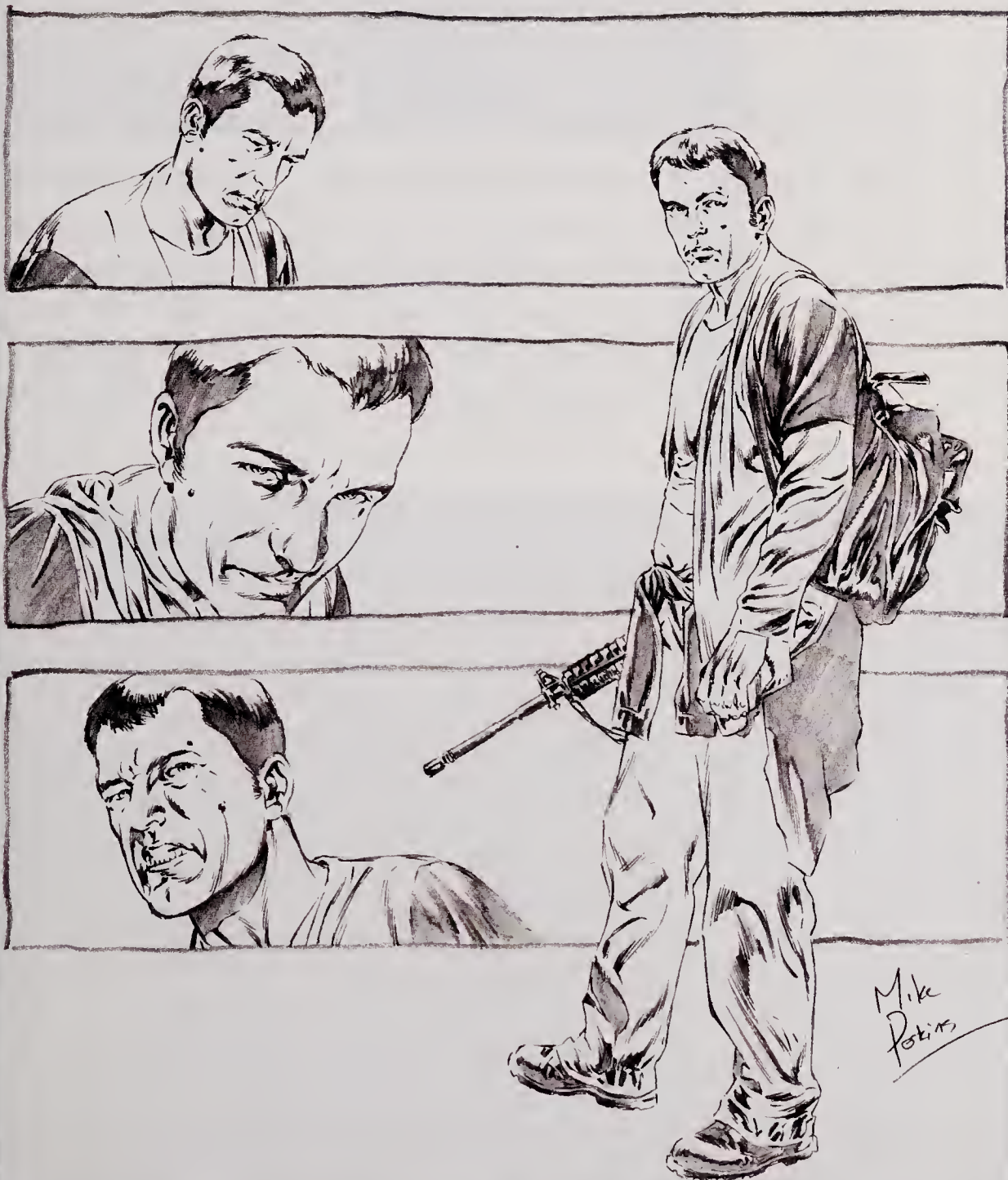
I love how — in both the novel and in Mike's sketches — Trashy's body is a catalogue of burns and injuries, most of them self-inflicted. Symbolizing, perhaps, just how truly ravaged and diseased and rotten the entire country becomes pre-apocalypse. (Or, if sociologist Glen Bateman is right, how rotten it was pre-apocalypse, as well.)

M.P. ON TRASHCAN MAN: The most fun character to depict — even though his appearance is somewhat horrific. That madness, that terrifying obsession, has to come across in the illustration, although there also has to be a smidgeon of pathos to him.

Stu Redman

R.A.S. ON STU REDMAN: He's our story's Everyman. Down to Earth, no-nonsense, decent, and plain-spoken. Steady and stoic. He's like John Proctor in "The Crucible" by Arthur Miller: A good man, trying to do his best during Godless times.

M.P. ON STU REDMAN: Yup, the Everyman. Constantly striving just to live a normal life. Trying to be a football star at school, trying to be a hard worker in a dying business, trying to be a normal husband and father in a tragically short marriage ... yet ... Stu needs to carry the dignity and determination that will see him through so very many hardships to come.





VARIANT COVER SKETCHES BY MIKE PERKINS

From Mike Perkins:

After it was determined that we would tackle the interconnecting covers, and decided which characters to concentrate on, we had to determine where the setting would be. In my mind there was only one place. The Lincoln Tunnel scene in the book is so visceral and finely imagined that it becomes a centerpiece for that section of the novel. Just before we'd decided to approach the covers in this way I'd taken the opportunity, whilst in New York for the convention, to wander around and take numerous photos for exact reference. One such place I knew needed to be spot-on was the Lincoln Tunnel.

We've also thrown into each scene something pertaining to each of the characters visualized — just something to keep your eyes open for.



ISSUE ONE · FLAGG

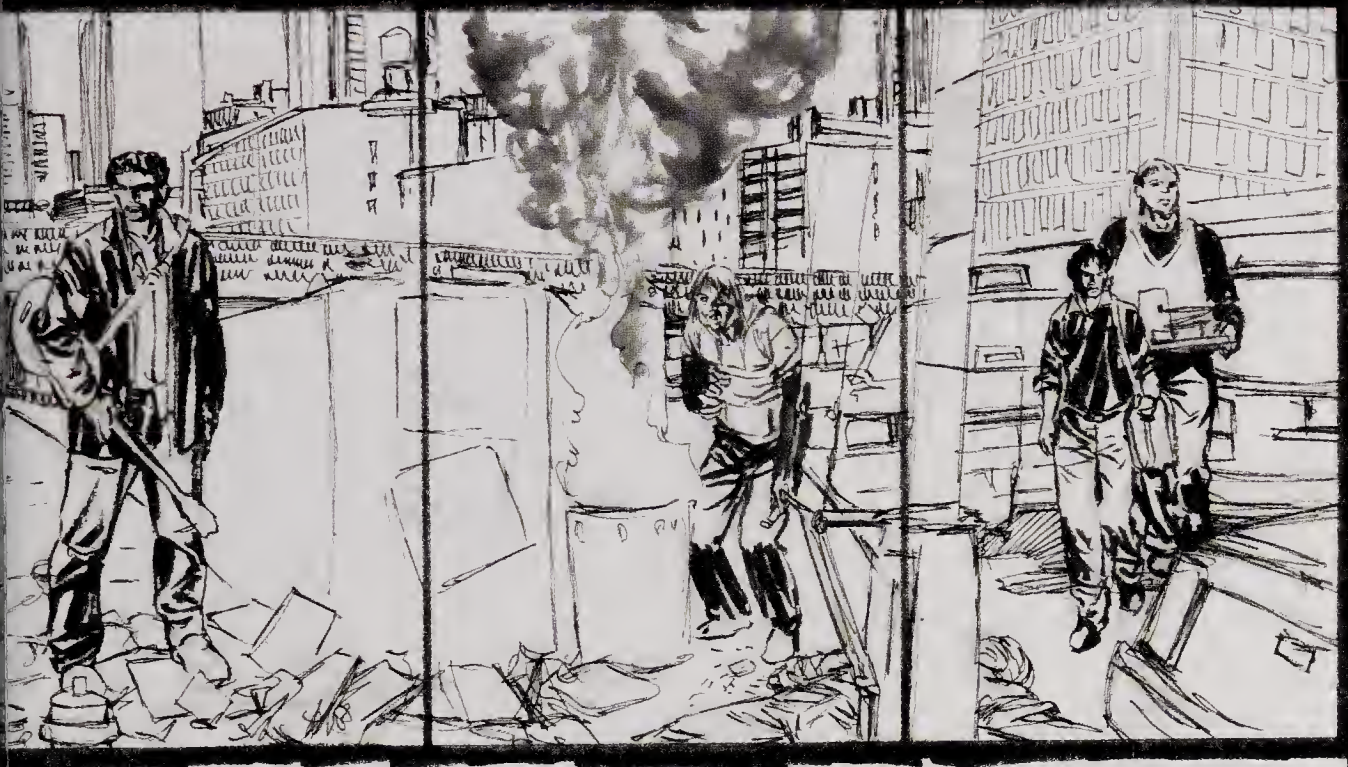
CLOSE UP OF FLAGG - IN SHADOW - WITH DEAD BODIES (CAPTAIN TRIPS) CARS CRASHED AND PILED-UP BEHIND HIM · FLAGG IS BECKONING US IN TO TAKE THE STAND .

ISSUE TWO: STU, FRAN + HAROLD

FRAN, TOUCHING BELLY, PROTECTED BY STU. HAROLD JEALOUSLY LOOKING ON. BABY STROLLER OVERTURNED - MOSTLY WITH BLANKET BUT WITH A TINY HAND SHOWING. A SMASHED PHOTO OF FRAN'S PARENTS ON THE GROUND

THE STAND: CAPTAIN TRIPS COMBINED VARIANT COVERS





ISSUE THREE : LARRY

LARRY UNDERWOOD WITH GUITAR, RUBBLE AND COPIES OF "BABY, CAN YOU DIG YOUR MAN", SCATTERED AROUND UNDER HIS FEET.

ISSUE FOUR : TRASHCAN

TRASHCAN MAN STARING AT A BURNING TRASHCAN. HE'S TRANSFIXED - HOLDING ON TO A LIGHTER WITH A MATCHBOX WITH SCATTERED MATCHES AT HIS FEET. RUBBLE AND BODY.

ISSUE FIVE: NICK+TOM

NICK ANDROS AND TOM WALKING THROUGH THE TRAFFIC. TOM HOLDING HIS TOY GARAGE.

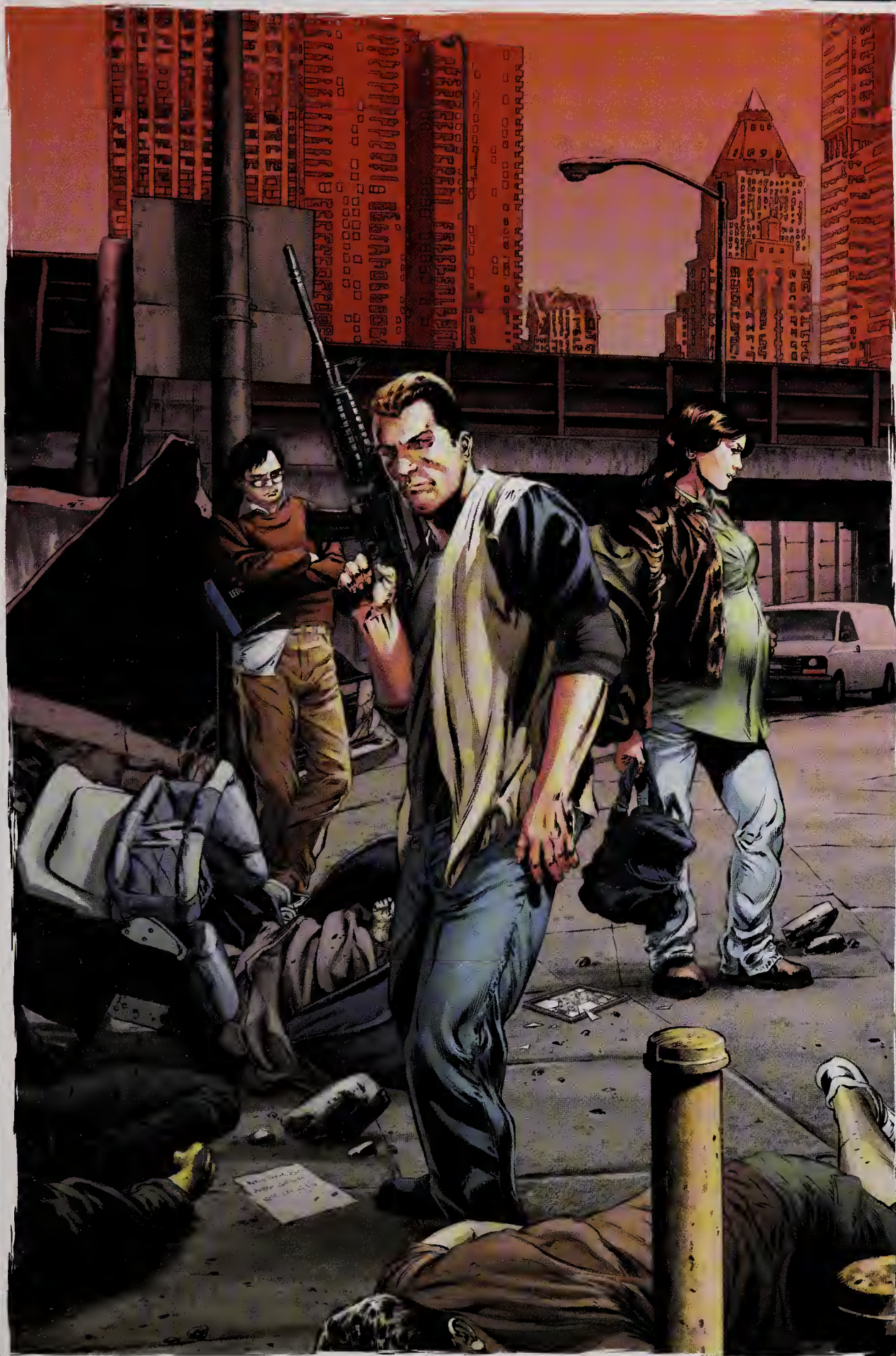
by Mike Perkins and Laura Martin





1

VARIANT COVER BY MIKE PERKINS AND LAURA MARTIN



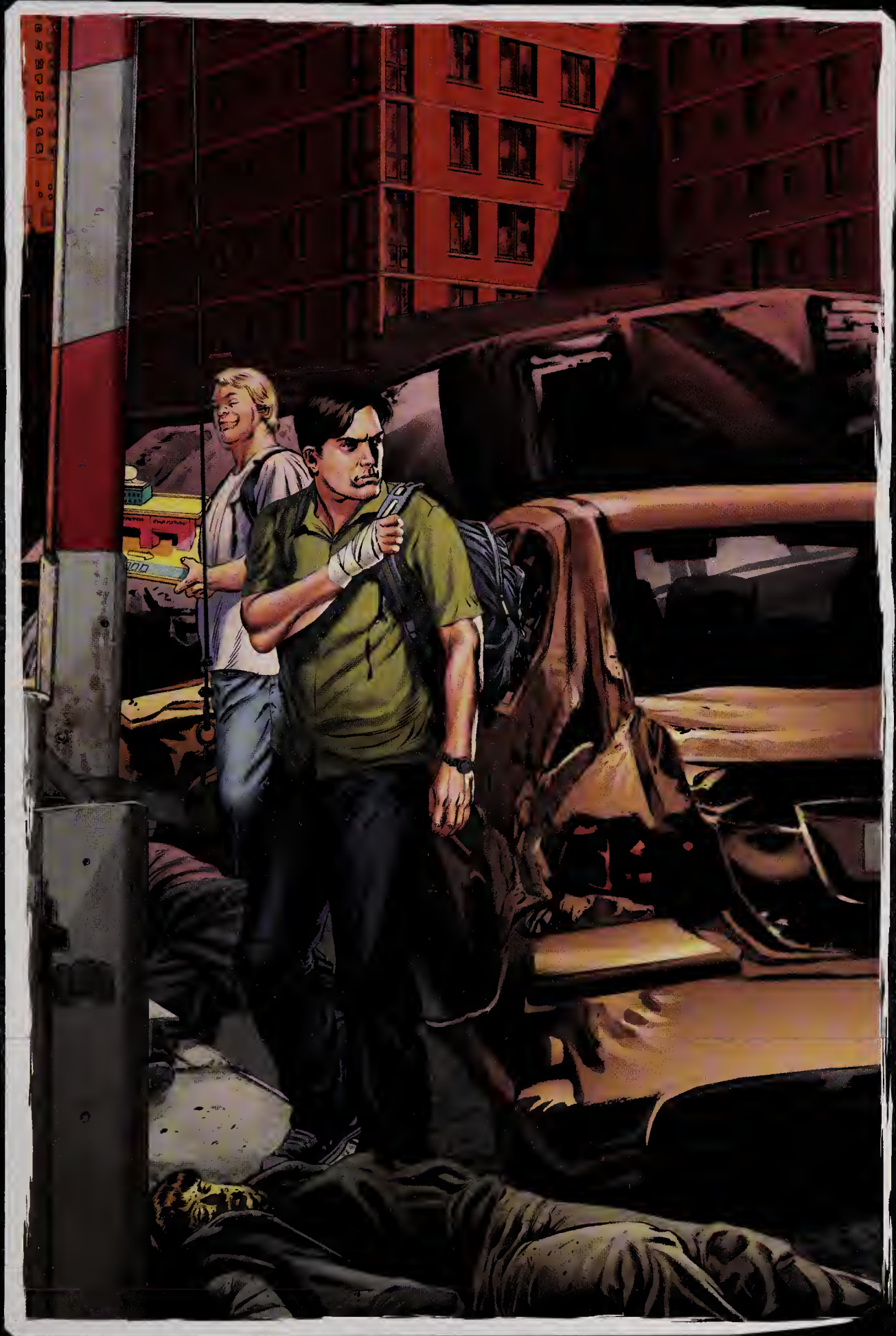
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VARIANT COVER BY MIKE PERKINS AND LAURA MARTINI



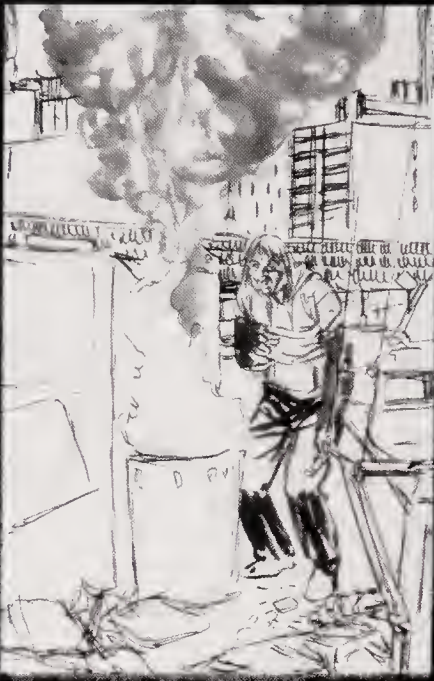
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VARIANT COVER BY MIKE PERKINS AND LAURA MARTIN



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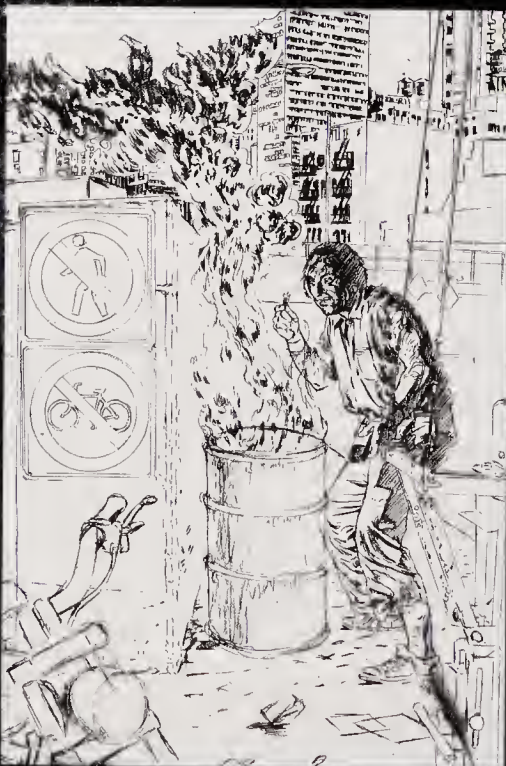
VARIANT COVER BY MIKE PERKINS AND LAURA MARTIN



ISSUE FOUR : TRASHCAN

TRASHCAN MAN STARING AT
A BURNING TRASHCAN. HE'S
TRANSFIXED - HOLDING ON TO A
LIGHTER WITH A MATCHBOX
WITH SCATTERED MATCHES AT
HIS FEET. RUBBLE AND BODY.

The Stand: Captain Trips #4 COVER PROCESS BY MIKE PERKINS





4

VARIANT COVER BY MIKE PERKINS AND LAURA MARTIN



1

COVER BY LEE BERMEJO AND LAURA MARTIN



1 SKETCH VARIANT
COVER BY LEE BERMEJO



2

COVER BY LEE BERMEJO AND LAURA MARTIN



2 SKETCH VARIANT
COVER BY LEE BERMEJO



3

COVER BY LEE BERMEJO AND LAURA MARTIN

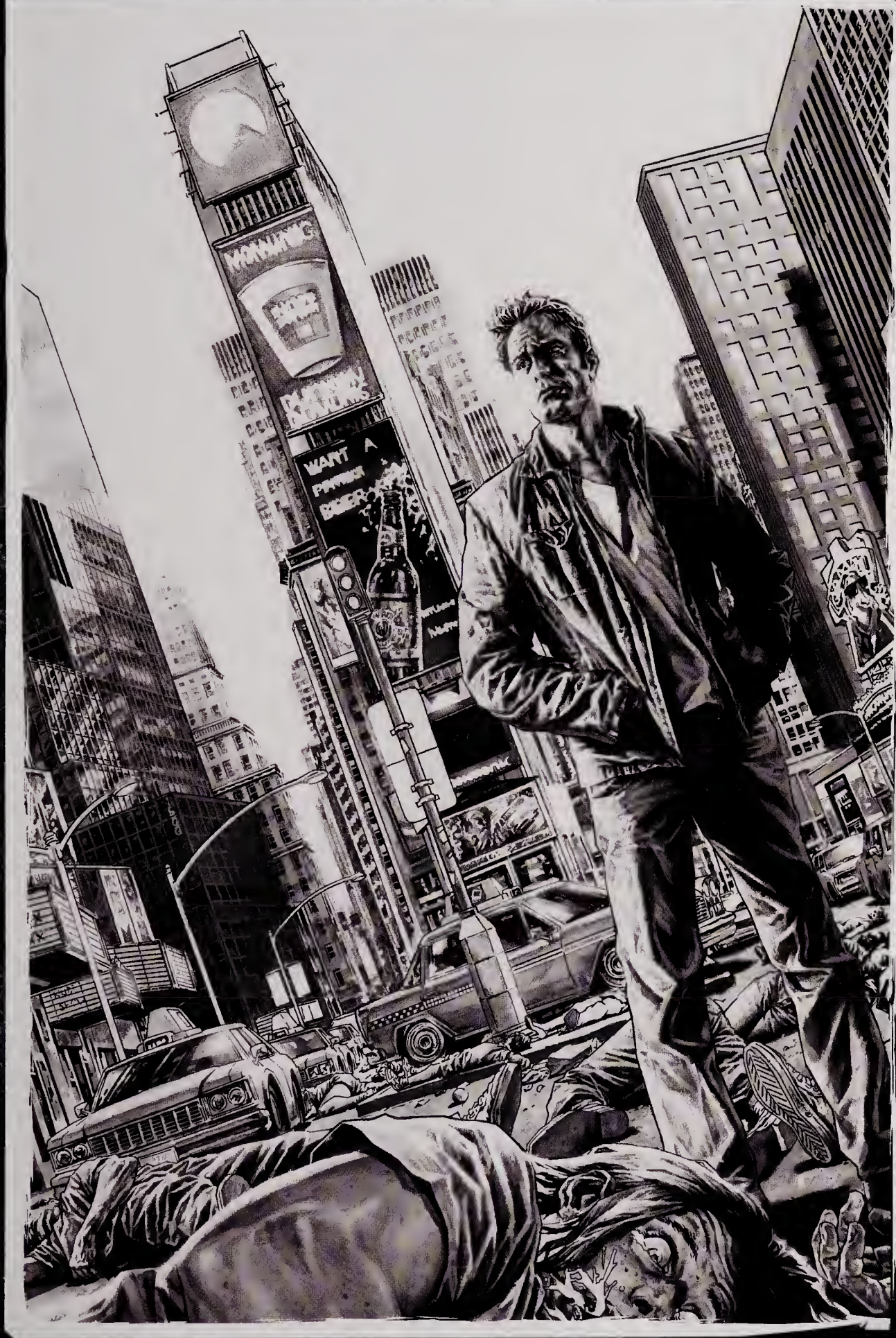


3 SKETCH VARIANT
COVER BY LEE BERMEJO



4

COVER BY LEE BERMEJO AND LAURA MARTIN



4 SKETCH VARIANT
COVER BY LEE BERMEJO



5

COVER BY LEE BERMEJO AND LAURA MARTIN



5 SKETCH VARIANT
COVER BY LEE BERMEJO

THE STAND: CAPTAIN TRIPS #3 - SCRIPT TO FINAL

PAGE TWO.

PANEL ONE.

Cut to: A nice, big, Mighty Marvel splash page. A parking lot that's baking under the hot Arizona sun. Our first two "bad guys," Lloyd and Poke, are walking from their stolen white Cadillac (parked in the background), towards a gas station/convenience store, which we don't have to necessarily see in this panel. But they're loaded for bear, Mike, and should look almost like... strutting desperadoes (only more pathetic). Lloyd is holding a Schmeisser; Poke's got a .357. If they weren't so stupid, they'd be real bad-asses, though I guess you can draw them that way, if you want, Mike.

FLOATING TEXT: BURRACK, ARIZONA.

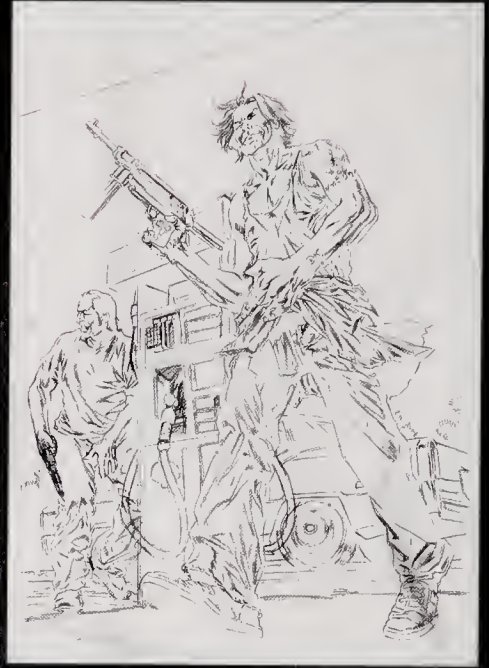
FLOATING TEXT: A DAY LATER.

CAPTION: Lloyd Henreid and Andrew "Poke" Freeman.

CAPTION: Had killed six people in as many days.

CAPTION: The radio was referring to them as "interstate fugitives."

CAPTION: Lloyd, especially, liked the sound of that.



PAGE EIGHTEEN.

PANEL ONE.

Back to a shot that includes both of our players, Mike. Starkey, pulling the trigger. Len, nervous, wanting to make sure he heard Starkey correctly. ("Troy," in other words, is like hitting the red button.)

STARKEY: Extreme covert countermeasures, Len.

STARKEY: "Troy."

LEN: Bill...

PANEL TWO.

One final beat, focusing on Starkey. He's not kidding around. No backing down. He means business. (And every other military cliché you can think of...)

STARKEY: I repeat, Len...

PANEL THREE.

Cut to: A lonely highway somewhere in southern Texas, the middle of the day. A car (a nondescript Pontiac) is driving along, away from us, the readers, and towards either a bend/turn in the highway, or a hill they're about to crest. (What I'm trying to get at, Mike, is that whoever's driving the car in this panel is about to be surprised by something in the middle of the highway/road.)

CAPTION: "Troy..."

DROP TEXT: US 36, SIPE SPRINGS.

DROP TEXT: ON THE WAY TO HOUSTON.

PANEL FOUR.

Now place the "camera" in front of the Pontiac; it's heading for us. And inside, we have two average newspaper-type guys. (Dealer's choice what they look like, Mike, but the photographer, riding shotgun, should be overweight and sweaty.) NOTE: The radio in the car is obviously playing Larry Underwood's hit single, "Baby Can You Dig Your Man?" ANOTHER NOTE: Both of the guys in the car, but especially the photographer, have just spotted/been surprised by something in the middle of the highway, so their expressions should reflect that.

CAPTION: A REPORTER AND A PHOTOGRAPHER FOR THE HOUSTON DAILY.

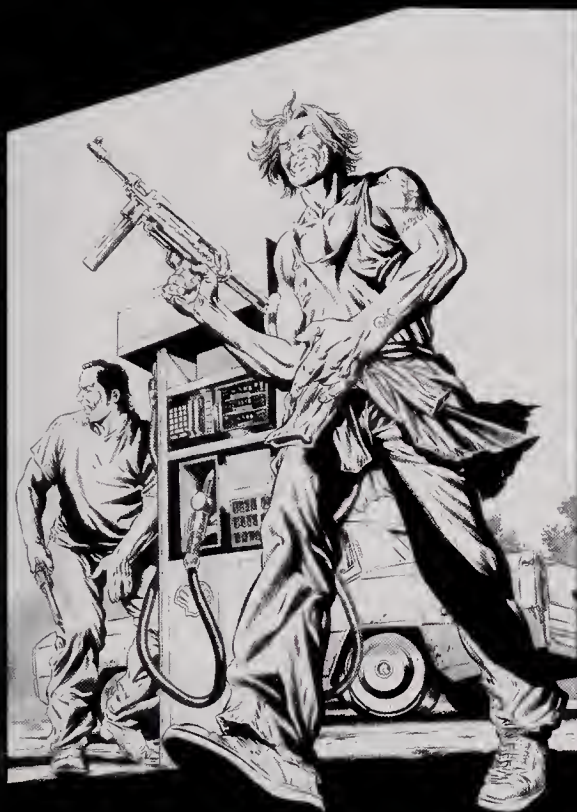
RADIO: Baby, can you dig your man?

RADIO: He's a righteous man...

RADIO: Baby, can you dig your man?

PHOTOGRAPHER: Holy Gawd, what the hell is this?





THE STAND: CAPTAIN TRIPS #4 - SCRIPT TO FINAL

PAGE FIVE (CONTINUED).

PANEL FOUR.

Cut to: Larry, standing at a payphone in Times Square. It's gray and raining, his collar is turned up. Around him, in the background, people are rushing to and fro, trying to duck the rain.

FLOATING TEXT: NEW YORK CITY.

FLOATING TEXT: TIMES SQUARE.

LARRY: Well, I'm on the East Coast...

LARRY: Somebody told me there were bloodsuckers on me and I ought to get out of the pool until they dropped off.

ARLENE/ON PHONE: Come to think of it, I heard something about that, big spender.

PANEL FIVE.

Back to Arlene. More or less a close-up on her as this conversation continues...

LARRY/ON PHONE: Yeah, listen, Arlene, is Wayne Stuckey around? I want to thank him for something.

ARLENE: You mean you haven't heard?

PANEL SIX.

Back to Larry. A close-up on him as what Arlene is telling him washes over him...

ARLENE/ON PHONE: He's in the hospital with this flu bug...

PAGE EIGHT.

PANEL ONE:

Continuing this conversation. Staying on Andy, as he gestures emphatically to the off-panel Lloyd. Maybe he's holding up a hand, with a certain number of fingers, as he counts off what he's saying. And maybe we're over Andy, looking down at him. (Or whatever you want, Mike, or can do to keep these three pages dynamic-ish.)

ANDY: You're going to trial in four days. We'll have a jury on the first day. The state will present its case on the second. I'll try to take up three days, I'll filibuster on my opening and closing statements—

2 ANDY: —but then the jury will retire and find you guilty in about three minutes.

PANEL TWO.

Shifting the focus to Lloyd. Who now—FINALLY—looks more than a little scared. Is maybe even sweating a little bit. Is squeaking out his line of dialogue:

LLOYD: (a squeak) And then?

PANEL THREE.

Back to Andy. A close-up or a hyper-close-up on him; maybe we see his face from the nose-down. And he's smiling almost gleefully, his mouth close to the phone's receiver. Like he's relishing what he's saying.

ANDY: Why, then you go on to Death Row at state prison and enjoy all that good food until it's time to ride the lightning.

PANEL FOUR.

Back to Lloyd. Also and again, more of a close-up on him. (Maybe we see him from the nose-up?) And he's even more scared in this panel...

5 ANDY (O.P.): It won't be long...

PANEL FIVE.

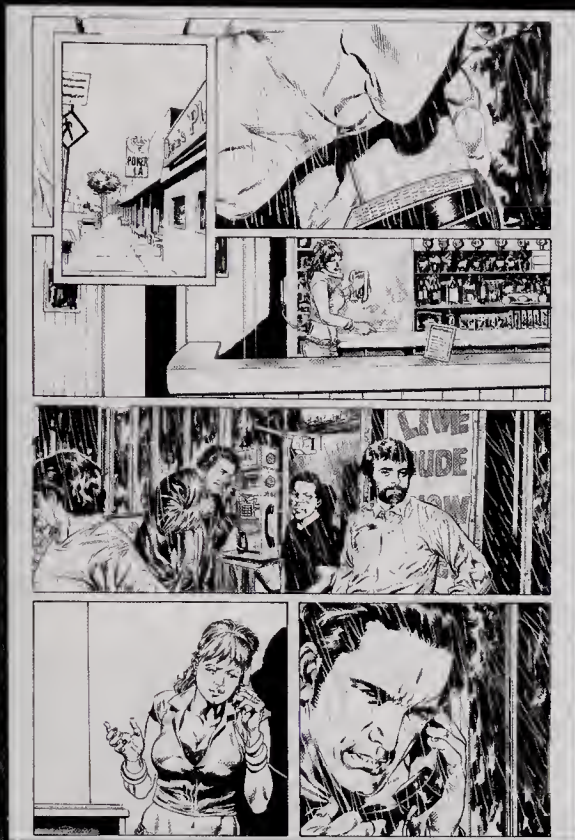
A wider panel that includes both of our players, Andy on the left, Lloyd on the right. Andy a little less intense in this panel. Almost as if he were sitting back and admiring his handiwork. Lloyd, shaken finally, maybe with a hand on his head in a "what-the-hell-did-I-get-myself-into?" gesture.

ANDY: You scared, Sylvester?

LLOYD: C-christ, yes, I'm scared.

LLOYD: From what you say, I'm a dead man.





THE STAND: CAPTAIN TRIPS #5 - SCRIPT TO FINAL

PAGE ONE.

PANEL ONE.

GENERAL NOTE: Mike (and everyone), this is kind of the All-Flagg issue, using mostly Chapter 23 from the novel. The idea is that we'll weave Flagg in and out of (and around) the other vignettes throughout the issue, while filling in his origin. Throughout, we'll be cutting back to him walking along Route 51, so I'll indicate where we might have images of Flagg just walking at the tops and bottoms of each page, or on the sides, set off from the rest of the panels on those pages, making this issue almost like an old-fashioned illuminated text—or like those early issues of Alan Moore's run on Swamp Thing. But for this panel, specifically, let's start nice and easy. A close-, or medium-, or long-shot (dealer's choice, Mike) of Randall Flagg, a knapsack on his back, walking along a lonely highway, through a summer night. Lots of stars in the sky. The moon shining down on him. Berie. Like something out of Unforgiven.

FLOATING TEXT: US 51.

CAPTION: Randall Flagg was a man of no age, a man called the Walkin Dude, or sometimes the Boogeyman.

PANEL TWO.

Staying on Flagg. More of a close-up, following the caption's lead, so that we see him in more detail—or, more specifically, what he's wearing in more detail.

CAPTION: He wore faded, pegged jeans and a denim jacket, with a button on each breast.

PANEL THREE.

You can do this in one panel or in two panels, Mike, but basically we're looking at a close-up on the pins on Flagg's jacket, which we're facing squarely, as though he were walking right towards us, which he is. The first button is a yellow smiley face (like something out of *The Watchmen*.) Beneath the second button, a cartoon pig's head wearing a policeman's cap, we see the words, in dripping, blood-red lettering: HOW'S YOUR PORK?

NO CAPTION OR DIALOGUE.

PANEL FOUR.

Now the "camera" is behind Flagg, looking down on his back—on the ratty, stuffed knapsack on his back. In front of Flagg, the pavement stretches out before him, and he's casting a long shadow, also before him...

CAPTION: There was a Boy Sc out knapsack on his back, old and battered.

CAPTION: Stuffed, like his pockets, with fifty different kinds of conflicting literature—pamphlets for all seasons, rhetoric for all reasons. When this man handed you a brochure, you took it no matter what the subject...

PANEL FIVE.

Still behind Flagg, looking at his butt, basically, so that we can see that he has brochures and flyers and tracts folded up in his jeans' back pockets. Strutting along, a slight sway in his hips. Lots of space—lots of landscape—on both sides of his torso, on both sides of the panel.

CAPTION: The dangers of atomic plants, the role played by the International Jewish Cartel in the overthrow of friendly governments, the CIA-Contra-cocaine connection, the blacks for Militant Equality, The Kode of the Klan...

CAPTION: Flagg had them all, and more, too

PAGE TWENTY-ONE.

PANEL ONE.

The first of two panels that run across the top of the page. A medium-shot of Flagg on the highway. And it's as if Flagg has just crested the top of a hill and stopped himself suddenly, arms at his sides, almost as if he were feeling a current of some kind of electricity coming into his body...

CAPTION: He stopped—

CAPTION: Because something was coming.

PANEL TWO.

A close-up on Flagg, on his shadowy face in profile, filling the panel. His eyes are closed and his expression—as much as we can see it—is of a man experiencing a kind of transcendence, face slightly turned upwards.

CAPTION: He could taste it, a sooty hot taste, as if God were planning a cook-out and all of civilization was going to be the barbecue.

CAPTION: He had been born when times changed, and the times were going to change again.

CAPTION: It was in the wind, in the wind of this soft Idaho evening.

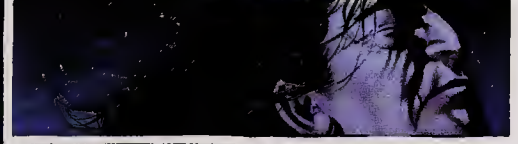
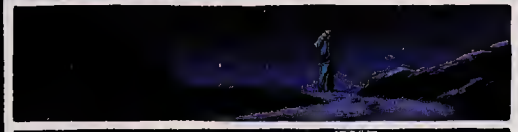
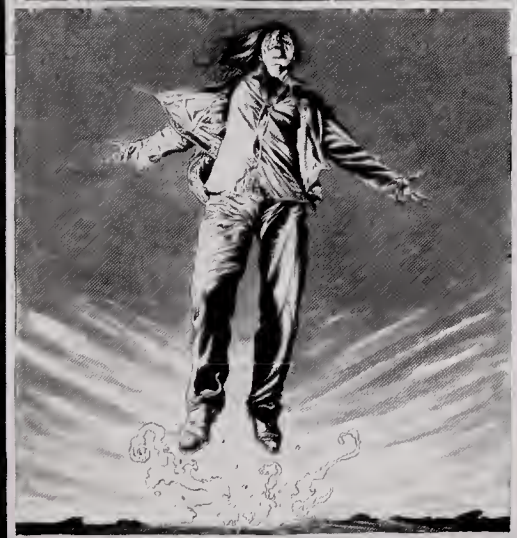
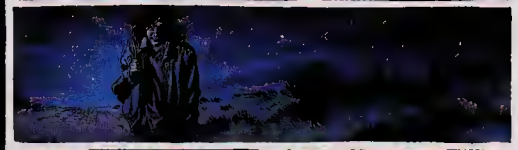
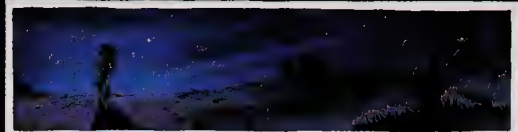
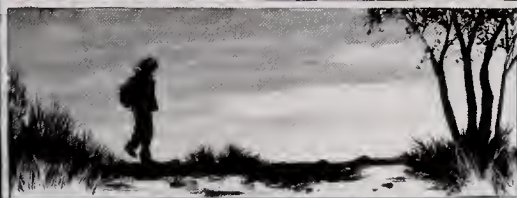
PANEL THREE.

The page's biggest panel by far—almost a splash page, Mike. But we're looking at Flagg directly, and he's facing us, the readers, squarely. And his eyes are out at his side, and he is LEVITATING A FOOT OFF THE GROUND. Behind him, the country seems to go on forever...

CAPTION: He knew it was almost time to be reborn...

CAPTION: ...else, why could he suddenly do magic?





THE STAND: CAPTAIN TRIPS #5
PAGE 2 PENCILS



THE STAND: CAPTAIN TRIPS #5
PAGE 3 PENCILS





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