

FROM THE PACES OF PROJECT SUPERPOWERS™

MASQUERADE™



THE
ABDUCTED!





Dynamite Entertainment Presents

MASQUERADE™

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THE WORLD WAR IS OVER.

I'D SEEN ATROCITIES,
WROUGHT BY BOTH
HUMAN AND SUPER
HUMAN HANDS, THAT
WILL NEVER LEAVE
MY MEMORY.

MONSTERS BORN OF
PERVERSED SCIENCE AND
FORGOTTEN MAGIC ALIKE
RAN ROUGHSHOD OVER
HUMANITY UNTIL PEOPLE
LIKE ME--LIKE US--SWEEP
IT ALL BACK UNDER THE
RUG OF HISTORY.



AND NOW, OUR
NUMBERS DWINDLING,
WE FIND OURSELVES
CONFRONTING THE
ORPHANS OF THAT
MISADVENTURE.

THE MISBEGOTTEN
OFFSPRING OF EVIL'S
ABORTED TRIUMPH STILL
WANDERING THE WORLD,
EAGER FOR CONFLICT.

THIS ISN'T REALLY
MY CUP OF TEA.

YOU KNOW, THE
GOOD OLD DAYS.

THE GIRL IN THE MASK



I MEAN, I'M MORE OF THE PLUCKY DETECTIVE TYPE.

EAVESDROP ON SOME SABOTEURS, SHOOT A CHANDELIER DOWN ON THEM, TURN THEM OVER TO A PATRONIZING DISTRICT ATTORNEY--THAT SORT OF THING.



I'M JUST NOT CUT OUT FOR THIS BUCK ROGERS STUFF.



ALL PART OF THE MYSTERY-MAN GAME, KID.

SOMETHING TRULY NUTTY CROPS UP IN YOUR NECK OF THE WOODS AND THE COPS HAND IT OFF TO THE FIRST PERSON THEY CAN FIND IN A MASK.



BESIDES, THESE GUYS AREN'T SO TOUGH.

ZZZZZZ



I WAS TRYING TO AVOID THAT. PYROMAN! THEY'RE NOT ANIMALS!

COULD HAVE FOOLED ME.



THE
DRAGON PEOPLE
HAVE BEEN LIVING IN
PEACEFUL EXILE SINCE
CAPTAIN FUTURE BUSTED
THE BLACK DRAGON
SOCIETY.

WELL,
LOOKS LIKE
THEY GOT
OVER IT.



THIS
ISN'T RIGHT.

TELL YOU WHAT,
FIND A QUIET CORNER
OF BEACH TO PLAY
SHERLOCK HOLMES WHILE
I GO SAVE THAT FISHING
CREW YOUR FRIENDLY
LIZARD-MEN SEEM SO
EAGER TO TURN TO
CHUM.



YOU DON'T
UNDERSTAND.
SOMETHING'S
WRONG HERE.



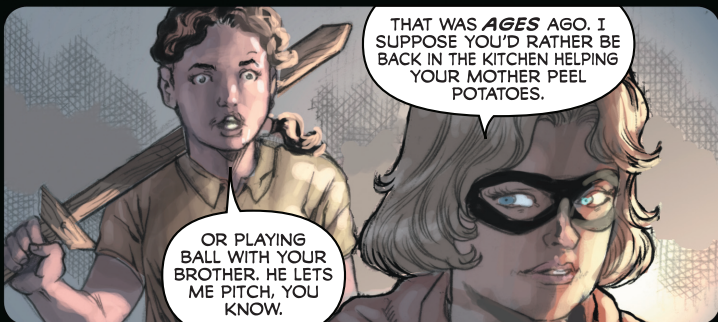
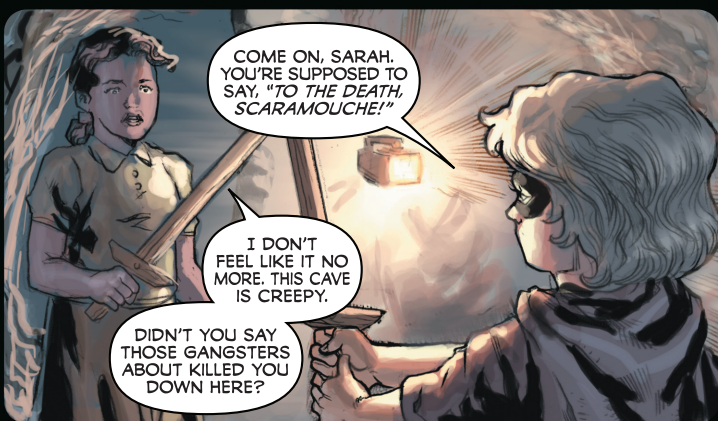
S-STAY
BACK,
FELLAS.

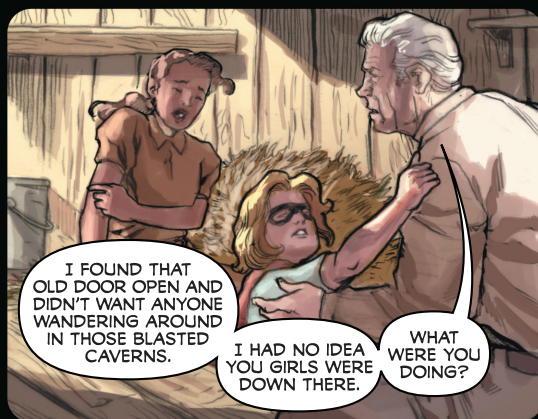


DON'T
MAKE ME.



DON'T
MAKE ME--







I SAID,
WHAT DO YOU
THINK YOU'RE
DOING?



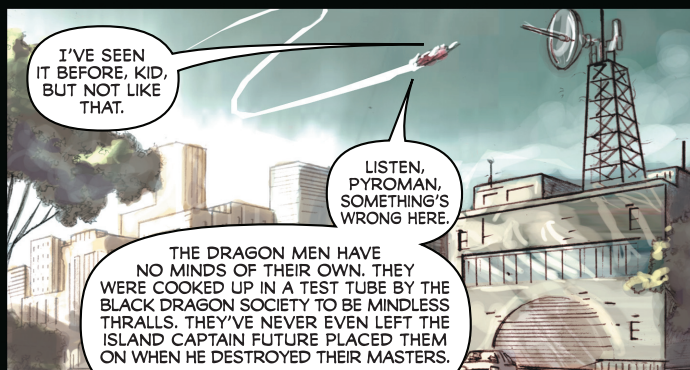
SORRY,
I WAS...
THINKING.

WELL, YOU
ABOUT GOT YOUR
THINKER BIT
OFF THERE.



IT--IT'S JUST
THAT SOMETIMES WHEN I'M
TRYING TO FIGURE SOMETHING
OUT I GO INTO A TRANCE UNTIL
A SOLUTION COMES TO ME.

MY MIND GOES A
MILE A MINUTE AND I
SORT OF LOSE MY
PLACE IN TIME.



I'VE SEEN
IT BEFORE, KID,
BUT NOT LIKE
THAT.

LISTEN,
PYROMAN,
SOMETHING'S
WRONG HERE.

THE DRAGON MEN HAVE
NO MINDS OF THEIR OWN. THEY
WERE COOKED UP IN A TEST TUBE BY THE
BLACK DRAGON SOCIETY TO BE MINDLESS
THRALLS. THEY'VE NEVER EVEN LEFT THE
ISLAND CAPTAIN FUTURE PLACED THEM
ON WHEN HE DESTROYED THEIR MASTERS.



SOMETHING IS
DRIVING THEM TO
ATTACK. SOMETHING
OR SOMEONE WE
DON'T SEE.



LOOK AT THE
WAY THEY'RE COMING
ASHORE. THEY SEEM TO
BE CONVERGING ON SOME
POINT INLAND. THEY'RE NOT
NECESSARILY ATTACKING
ANYONE AS MUCH AS
SMASHING THOSE IN
THEIR WAY.

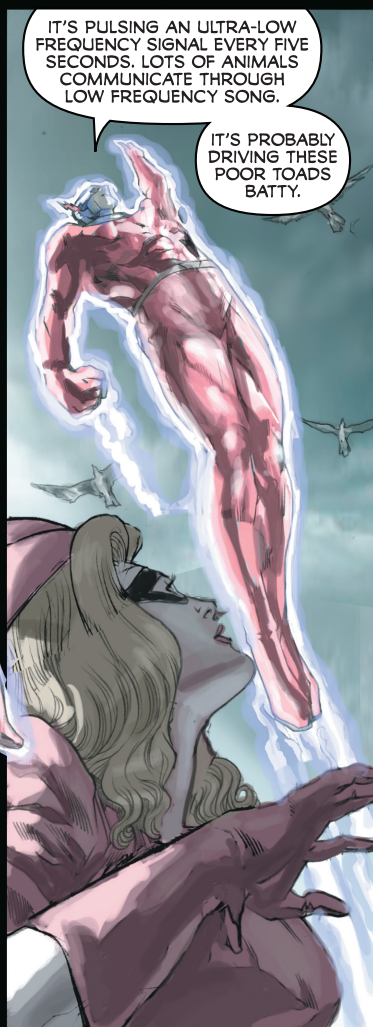
WE
NEED TO FIND
THE SOURCE OF
THATS CONTROL.
A SIGNAL OR--

I SEE IT.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I SEE THE SOURCE. THAT RADIO TOWER HAS A MALFUNCTIONING TRANSMITTER.



IT'S PULSING AN ULTRA-LOW FREQUENCY SIGNAL EVERY FIVE SECONDS. LOTS OF ANIMALS COMMUNICATE THROUGH LOW FREQUENCY SONG.

IT'S PROBABLY DRIVING THESE POOR TOADS BATTY.



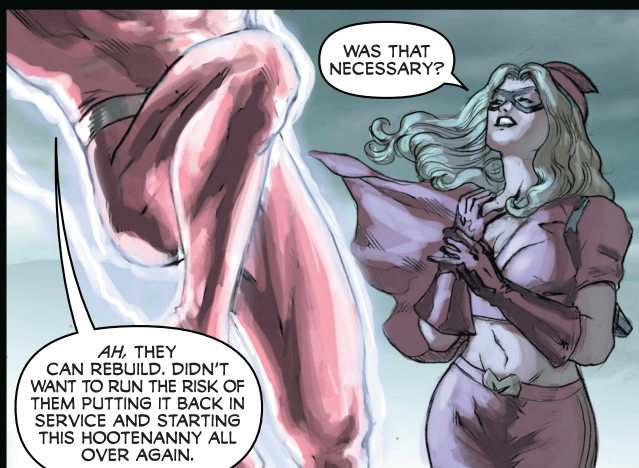
YOU SEE RADIO WAVES?

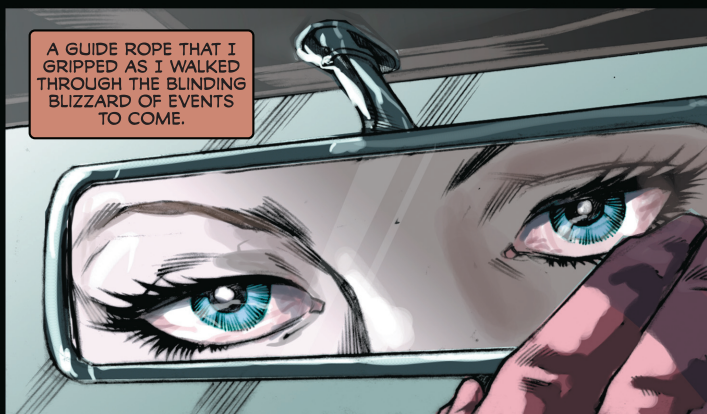
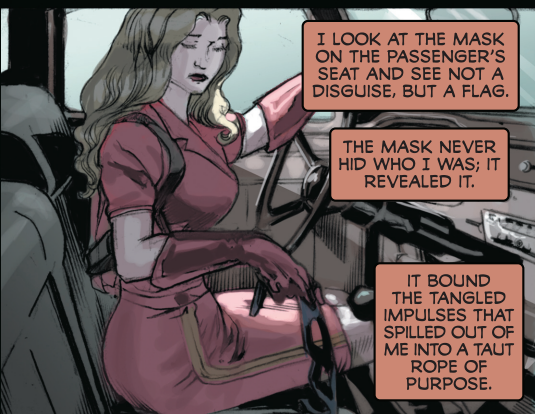
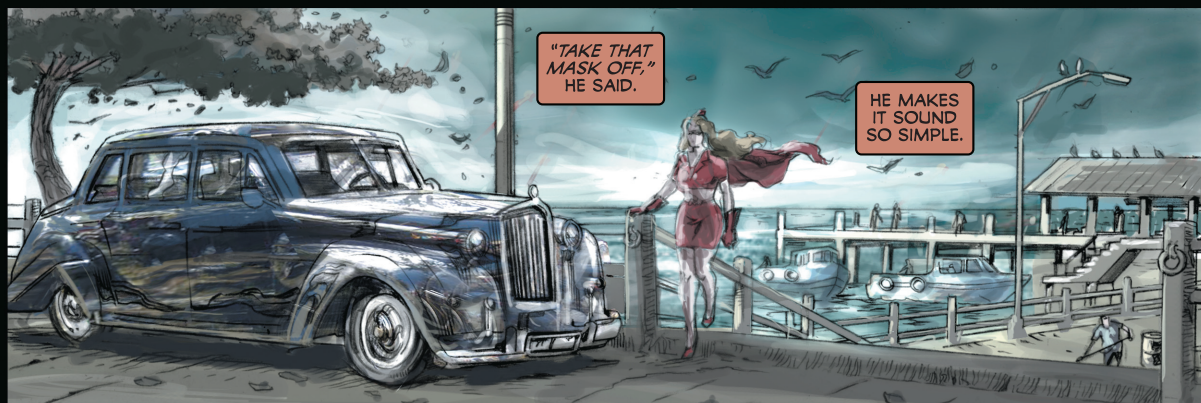
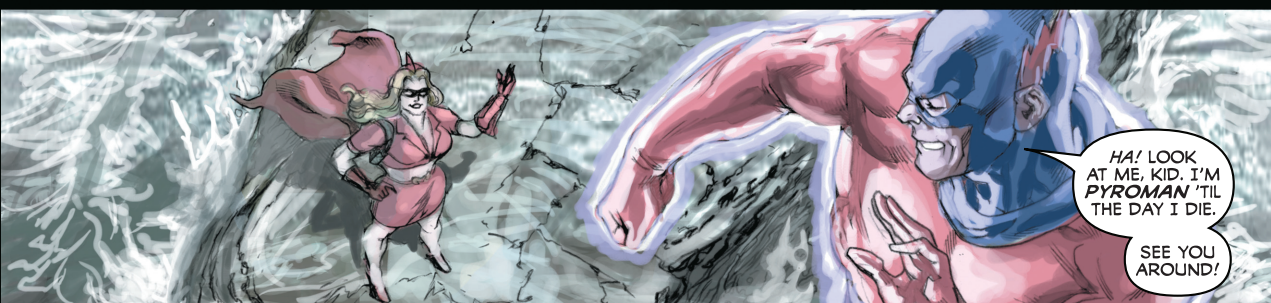
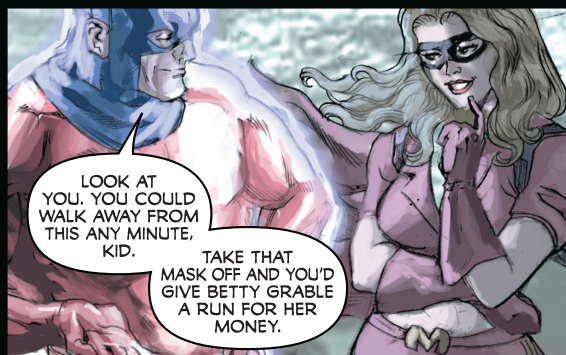
LOOK WHO'S TALKING. I WOULD HAVE NEVER KNOWN TO LOOK WITHOUT YOUR FORTUNE TELLER ACT OVER THERE.

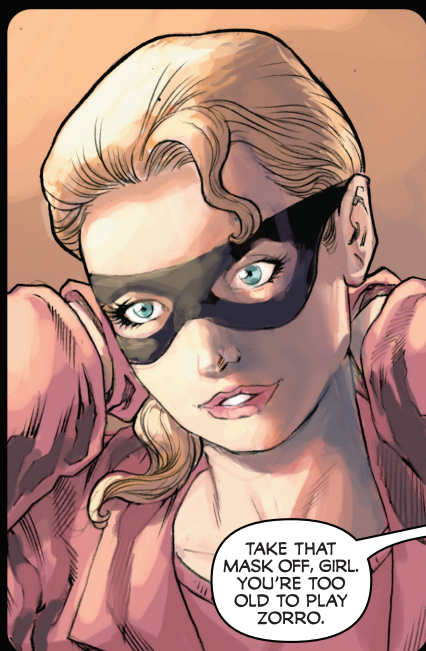


HANG ON.

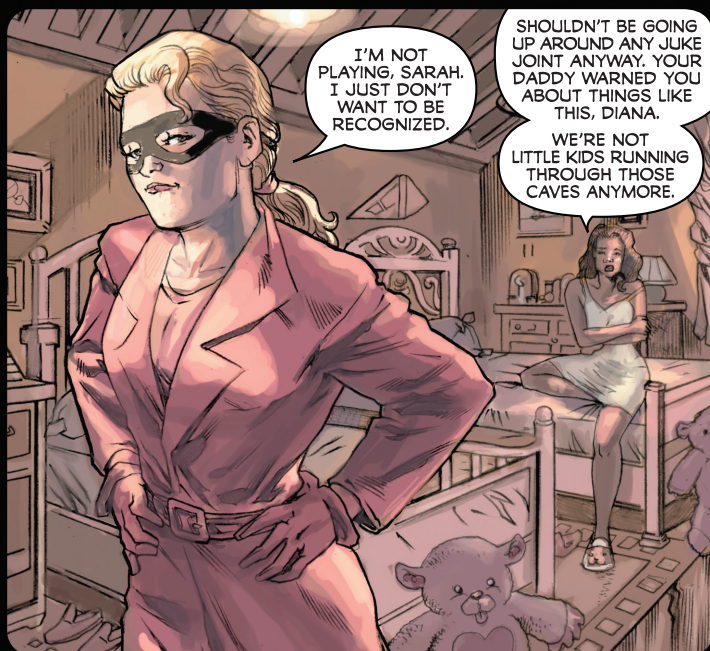
KRAAK







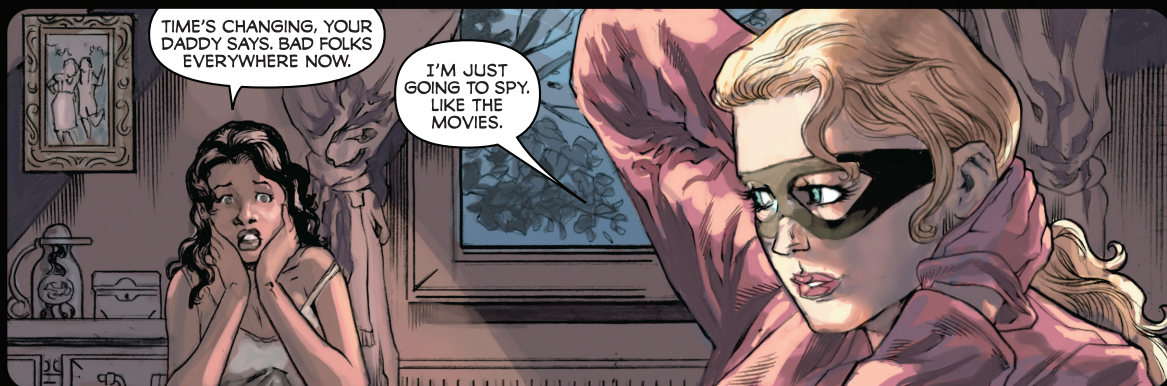
TAKE THAT MASK OFF, GIRL. YOU'RE TOO OLD TO PLAY ZORRO.



I'M NOT PLAYING, SARAH. I JUST DON'T WANT TO BE RECOGNIZED.

SHOULDN'T BE GOING UP AROUND ANY JUKE JOINT ANYWAY. YOUR DADDY WARNED YOU ABOUT THINGS LIKE THIS, DIANA.

WE'RE NOT LITTLE KIDS RUNNING THROUGH THOSE CAVES ANYMORE.



TIME'S CHANGING, YOUR DADDY SAYS. BAD FOLKS EVERYWHERE NOW.

I'M JUST GOING TO SPY, LIKE THE MOVIES.



NOW YOU JUST STAY UNDER THOSE COVERS. FATHER COMES TO LOOK IN ON ME AROUND ELEVEN, BUT HE NEVER GETS TOO CLOSE.

AND IF HE CATCHES ME? THAT'S ON MY MOMMA.

NONSENSE. JUST TELL HIM I INVITED YOU UP FROM THE SERVANT'S COTTAGE TO SLEEP OVER AND YOU HAD NO IDEA I WAS GONE.



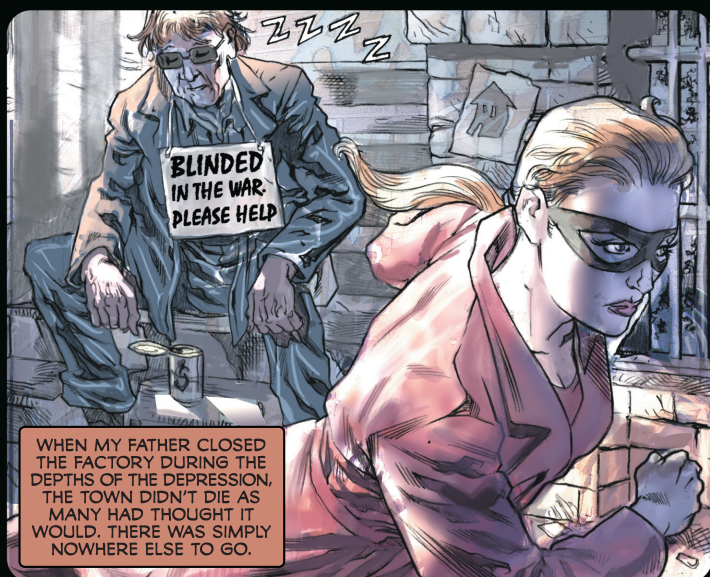
DIANA!

SHHH! YOU'LL WAKE SOMEONE.



IT WAS A SHORT DISTANCE FROM THE EDGE OF MY FAMILY'S ESTATE TO THE WORN STREETS OF TOWN, BUT THE THICKET OF DEW-SLICKED BRANCHES GRASPING AT ME IN THE DARKNESS MADE IT FEEL LIKE A LONG JOURNEY.

LIKE AN ODYSSEY, LIKE WALKING FROM ONE PLANET TO ANOTHER.



WHEN MY FATHER CLOSED THE FACTORY DURING THE DEPTHS OF THE DEPRESSION, THE TOWN DIDN'T DIE AS MANY HAD THOUGHT IT WOULD. THERE WAS SIMPLY NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.



IT HUNG LOWER, IT SEEMED. BUILDINGS NOT EVEN TEN YEARS OLD SAGGED LIKE ANCIENT RUINS.



AND THE PEOPLE, ONCE PROUD WITH WORK AND NOW SHAMED BY IDLENESS, SOUGHT DISTRACTION ON EVERY CORNER.

C'MON, FOURS. DADDY NEEDS FOURS.



I CAME TO WATCH THEM SPIN OUT THE STORIES OF THEIR LIVES.

SON OF A--



BEAUTIFUL AND BRITTLE.

PAY UP, SUCKER.

LOOK, MIKE. I--

THESE BRUISED SOULS ON THE STREETS BELOW, SQUIRMING AND YELPING, LAUGHING AND CRYING, SEEMED AS IF THEY COULD SOMEHOW TRANSFER THEIR IMMEDIACY TO MINE.

YOU CAN'T
PLAY WHAT
YOU CAN'T
PAY.

BY CONTACT.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I EXPECTED TO ACCOMPLISH BY LEAPING INTO THE GAME LIKE THAT. SIXTEEN AND ALL OF NINETY-EIGHT POUNDS.

ANY ONE OF THOSE MEN
COULD HAVE RIPPED ME
LIMB FROM LIMB.





IT'S NOT THE SAME.



YOU'RE TELLING ME, SITTING IN THE COLD TO BUST A BUNCH OF DOPE PEDDLERS IN NEW JERSEY ISN'T QUITE THE SAME AS FIGHTING AN ARMADA OF MOON MEN AT THE WORLD'S FAIR, IS IT?

THINGS DO SEEM RATHER FLAT NOWADAYS.



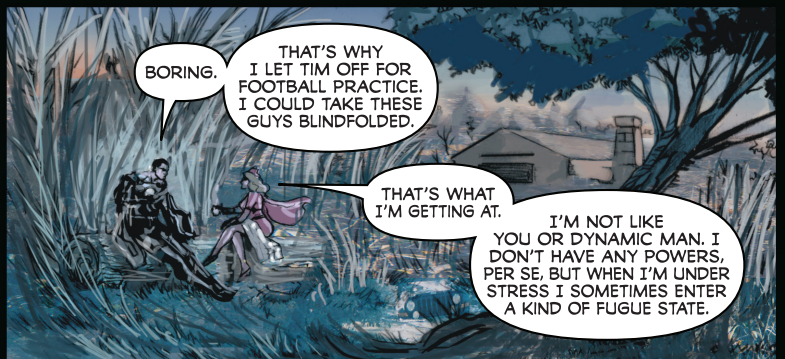
WHAT I WOULDN'T GIVE FOR ANOTHER CRACK AT SOME BUBBLE-EYED SUBTERRANEAN DICTATOR, OR A GIANT, MUTATED NAZI APE-MAN.

I GUESS I SHOULDN'T SAY THAT.



NO, I UNDERSTAND. THAT'S PART OF THE PROBLEM, ACTUALLY.

THINGS SEEM TO BE EVENING OUT, DON'T THEY? THE THREATS WE FACE SEEM TO BE GETTING MORE PEDESTRIAN BY THE DAY.



BORING.

THAT'S WHY I LET TIM OFF FOR FOOTBALL PRACTICE. I COULD TAKE THESE GUYS BLINDFOLDED.

THAT'S WHAT I'M GETTING AT.

I'M NOT LIKE YOU OR DYNAMIC MAN. I DON'T HAVE ANY POWERS, PER SE, BUT WHEN I'M UNDER STRESS I SOMETIMES ENTER A KIND OF FUGUE STATE.



I REMEMBER. THAT'S HOW WE BUSTED THAT WHITE SLAVERY GANG RUNNING OUT OF THAT BOARDING SCHOOL IN FLORIDA.

RIGHT. WHEN I'M IN THAT TRANCE I CAN SORT THROUGH ALL KINDS OF INFORMATION--CLUES AND SUCH--AT HIGH SPEED. I SEE PATTERNS THAT I WOULDN'T NORMALLY.



SO YOU'D EXPECT WITH THINGS SLOWING DOWN SINCE THE WAR, WITH SO MANY OF OUR KIND ON BOTH SIDES JUST SORT OF DROPPING OUT, THAT I'D HAVE THESE SPELLS LESS AND LESS...

KID, YOU OKAY?

I--I DON'T KNOW. THESE SPELLS COME ON ME SO FREQUENTLY NOW THAT I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF I'M HERE RIGHT NOW OR SOMEWHERE IN THE PAST.

I FEEL LIKE I'M LOST IN MY OWN MEMORIES.



LISTEN, MAYBE YOU NEED SOME TIME OFF.

THAT ONLY MAKES IT WORSE.

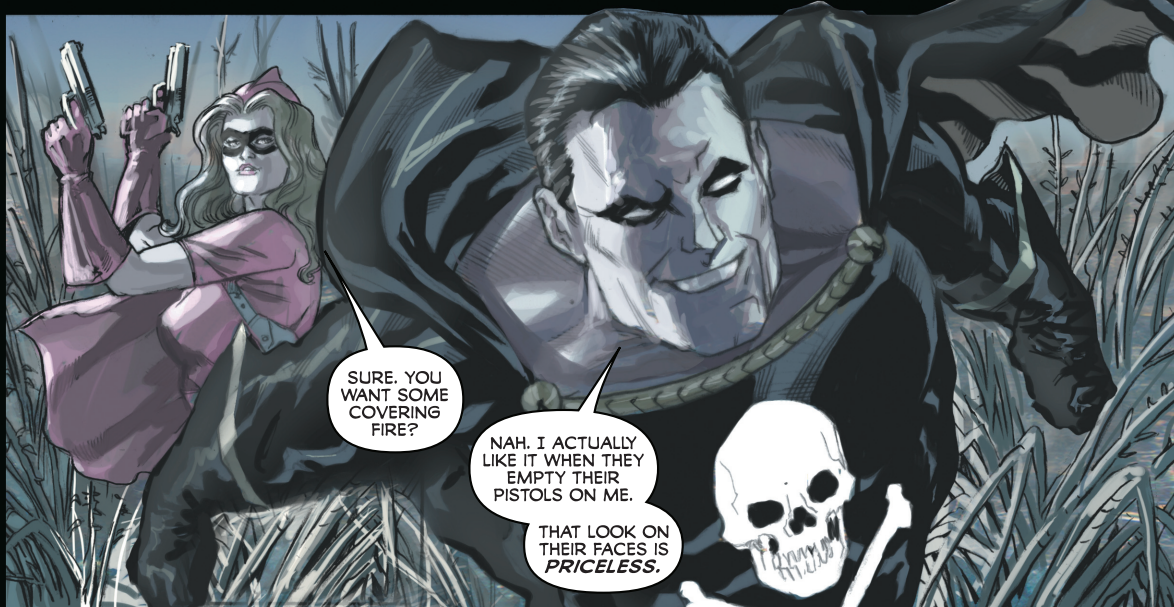
IT'S LIKE THERE'S SOMETHING BIG--BIGGER THAN THE WAR EVEN--HANGING OVER US ALL, AND MY MIND IS SPINNING WILDLY TRYING TO SEE IT BEFORE IT TAKES SHAPE.



I UNDERSTAND--



AH, HECK. THERE'S THE PLANE. CAN WE PICK UP ON THIS IN A MINUTE?



SURE. YOU WANT SOME COVERING FIRE?

NAH. I ACTUALLY LIKE IT WHEN THEY EMPTY THEIR PISTOLS ON ME.

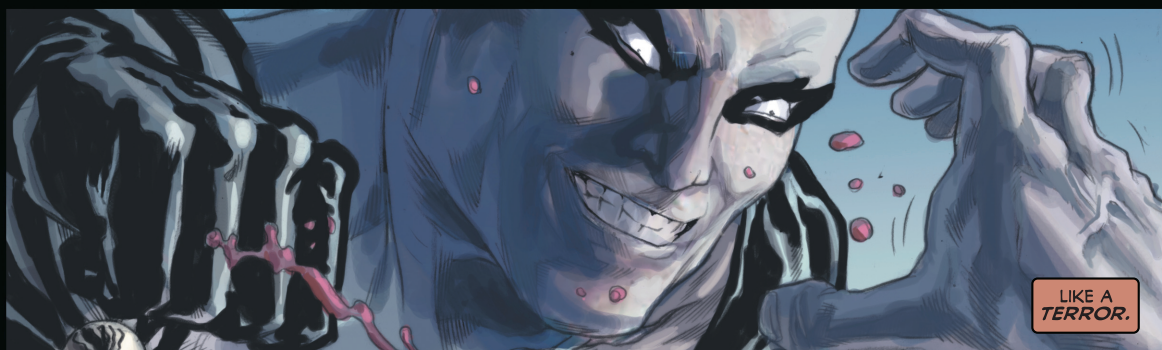
THAT LOOK ON THEIR FACES IS PRICELESS.



HE'S NOT LYING.



HE'S AMONG THEM LIKE A TIGER, LIKE
A TORNADO OF FISTS AND TEETH...



LIKE A
TERROR.

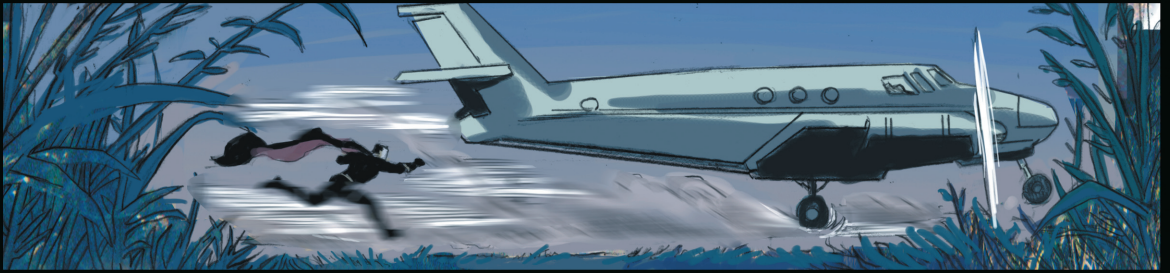


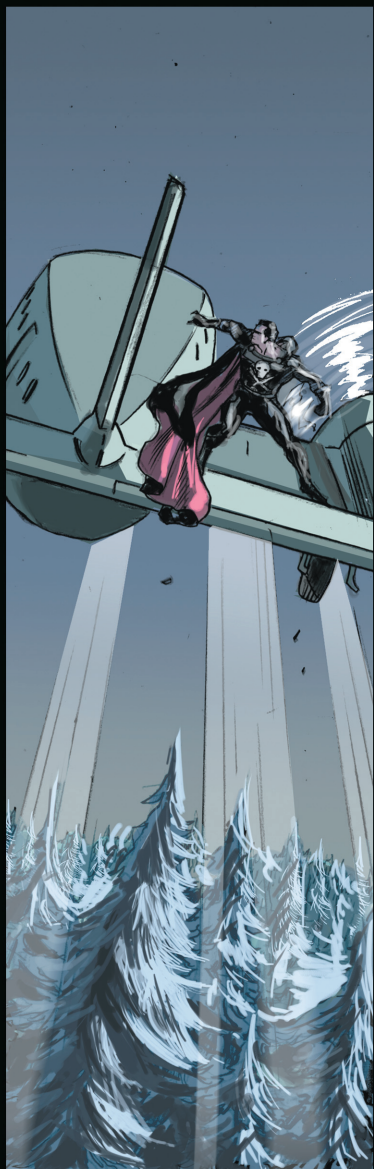
SHOOT. I
JUMPED THE
GUN.

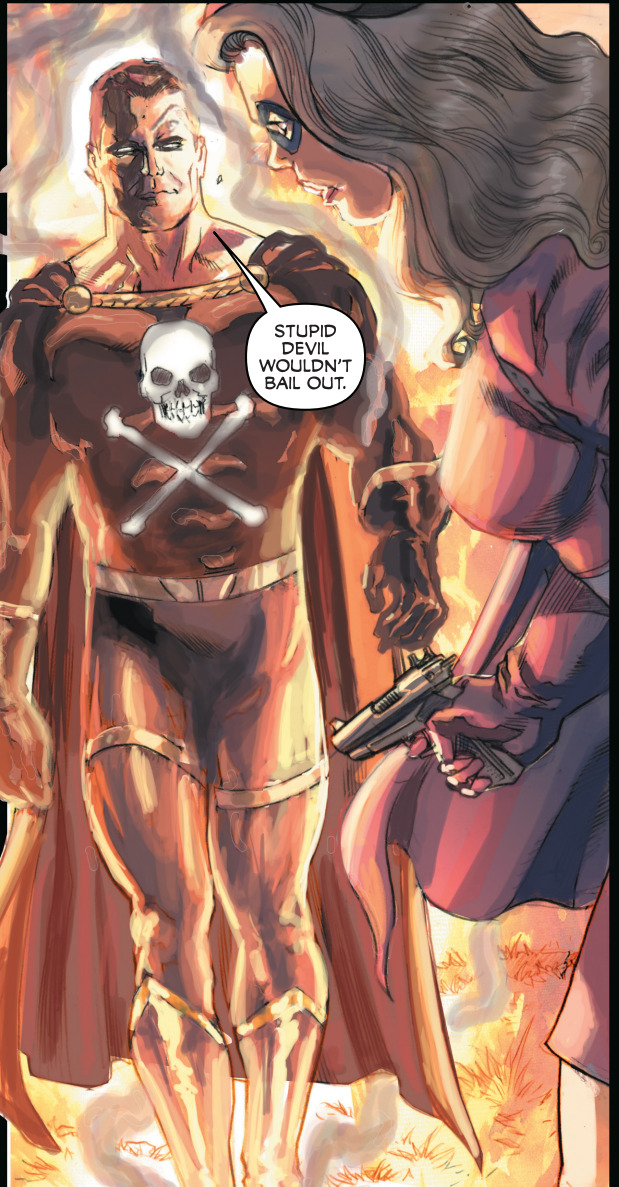


COULD YOU
KEEP AN EYE ON
THESE CHUMPS WHILE
I GO AFTER THAT
PILOT? HALF THE
DOPE'S STILL ON
THAT THING.

I'VE
GOT IT.









LOOK, YOU'RE STILL YOUNG, BUT MAYBE THE UNNAMED FEAR LOOMING OVER YOUR LIFE IS SIMPLY THE FACT THAT YOU'RE GETTING A LITTLE OLD FOR THE LONG UNDERWEAR GAME.

MAYBE IT'S TIME TO SETTLE DOWN. IN FACT, I BET DOLLARS TO DOUGHNUTS THAT'S WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE FLAME AND THE ARROW.

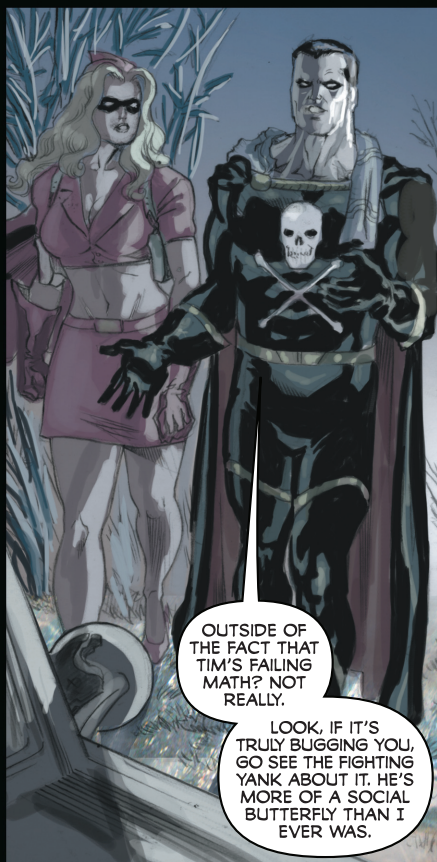


I MEAN, WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR ONE OF US TO RETIRE? WE TAKE OFF THE MASK AND WE'VE DISAPPEARED.

NOTHING NEFARIOUS ABOUT IT.



AND YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE ANYTHING IS GOING WRONG?



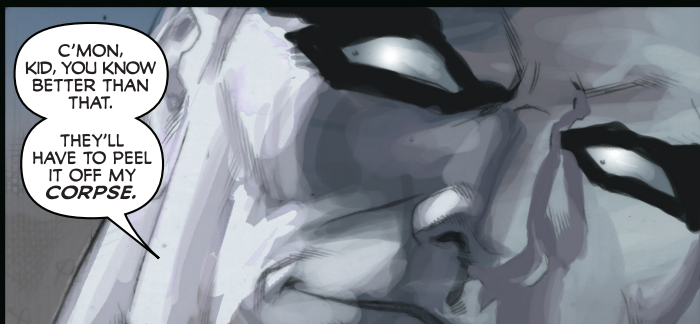
OUTSIDE OF THE FACT THAT TIM'S FAILING MATH? NOT REALLY.

LOOK, IF IT'S TRULY BUGGING YOU, GO SEE THE FIGHTING YANK ABOUT IT. HE'S MORE OF A SOCIAL BUTTERFLY THAN I EVER WAS.



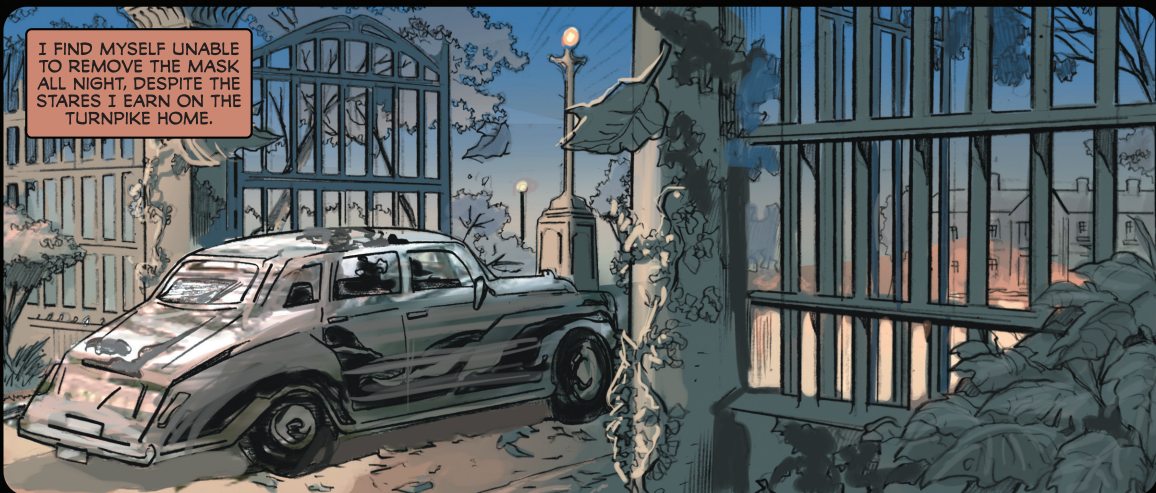
HE PROBABLY KNOWS ALL YOUR LONG LOST PALS' CURRENT WHEREABOUTS. AS I RECALL HE WORKED MOST OF THEIR FINAL CASES WITH THEM.

AND YOU? YOU EVER TEMPTED TO TAKE OFF THE MASK?

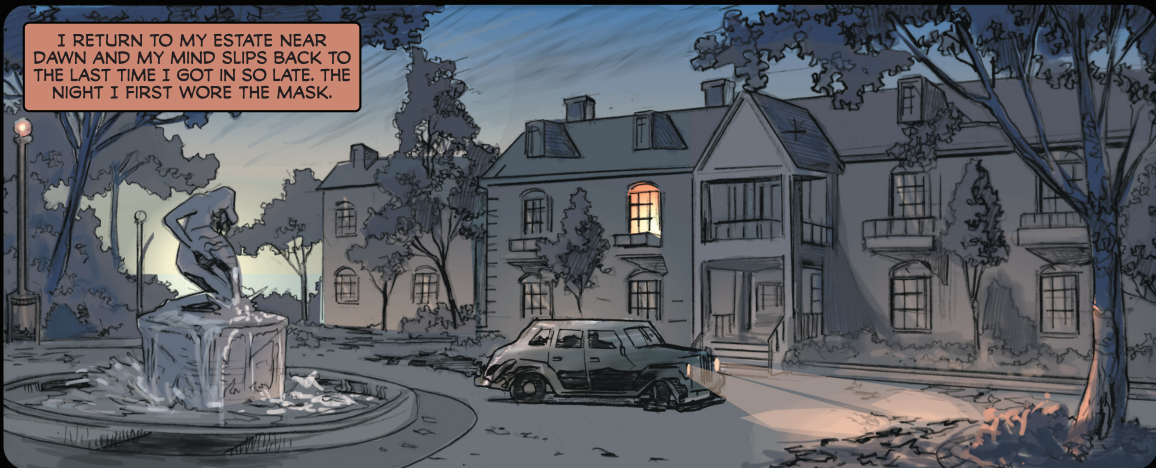


C'MON, KID, YOU KNOW BETTER THAN THAT.

THEY'LL HAVE TO PEEL IT OFF MY **CORPSE**.



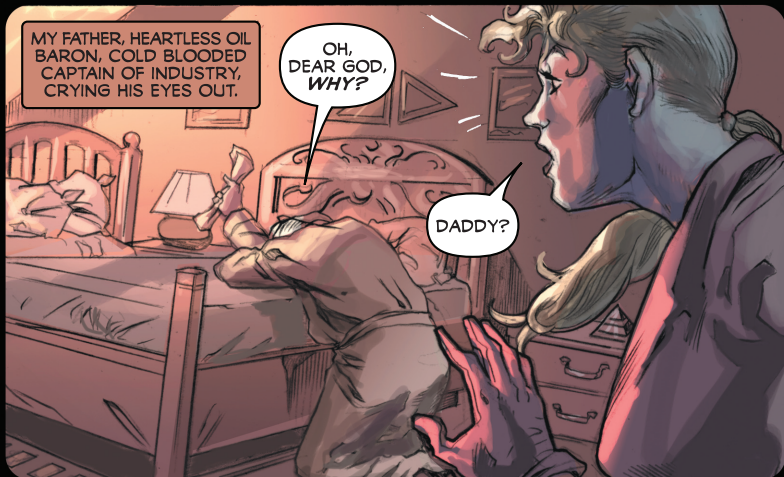
I FIND MYSELF UNABLE TO REMOVE THE MASK ALL NIGHT, DESPITE THE STARES I EARN ON THE TURNPIKE HOME.



I RETURN TO MY ESTATE NEAR DAWN AND MY MIND SLIPS BACK TO THE LAST TIME I GOT IN SO LATE. THE NIGHT I FIRST WORE THE MASK.



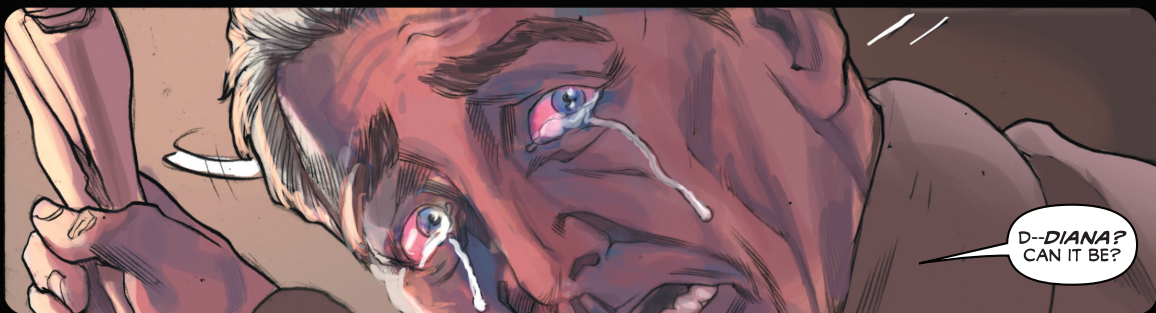
THE NIGHT I HEARD A SOUND I HAD NOT HEARD SINCE THE DAY MY MOTHER DIED.



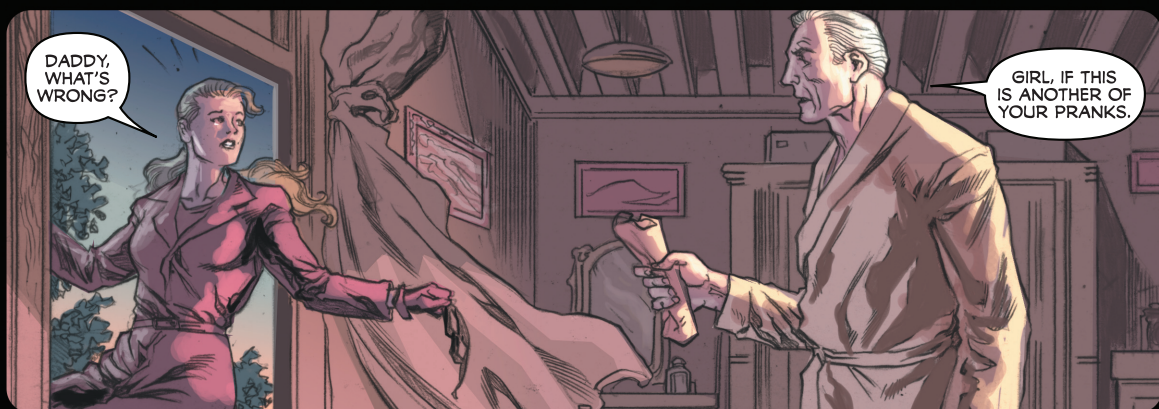
MY FATHER, HEARTLESS OIL BARON, COLD BLOODED CAPTAIN OF INDUSTRY, CRYING HIS EYES OUT.

OH, DEAR GOD, WHY?

DADDY?



D--DIANA? CAN IT BE?



to be continued...