



"LAST NIGHT IN LA JOLLA WAS BRUTAL, ONLY WORD FOR IT."

"*SOMETHING* GATE-CRASHED A SECRET MEETING OF SOME OF AMERICA'S MOST HIGHLY-PAID HEDGE FUND MANAGERS, ELECTRONIC TRADERS, QUANTITATIVE ANALYSTS, AND STOCHASTIC CALCULUS GURUS."

"THIRTY MINUTES LATER, ALL OF THE ABOVE WERE *DEAD.*"

"THEY'D KILLED EACH OTHER."

"CORRECTION..."

...THE THING THAT HAD POSSESSED TWO OF THEM HAD KILLED THE REST.

AND THEN CONVENIENTLY SLAUGHTERED EACH OTHER.



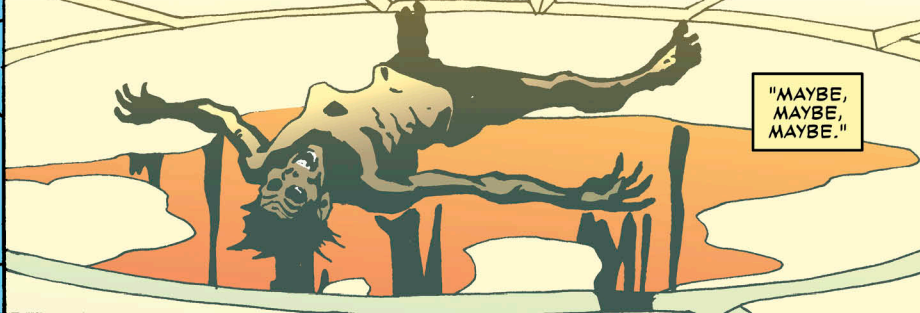
AT THE SAME TIME AS THIS MAYHEM WAS GOING DOWN, OUR TRADER WHO'D BEEN POSSESSED BY A DARK LOOP WAS GOING HYSTERICAL.

WE TRIED TO SEDATE HIM BUT NOTHING WORKED.

LING, GIVE ME A PICTURE OF THAT THING.



"MAYBE IT SOMEHOW SENSED WHAT WAS GOING DOWN IN LA JOLLA AND IT BURNED ITSELF OUT."



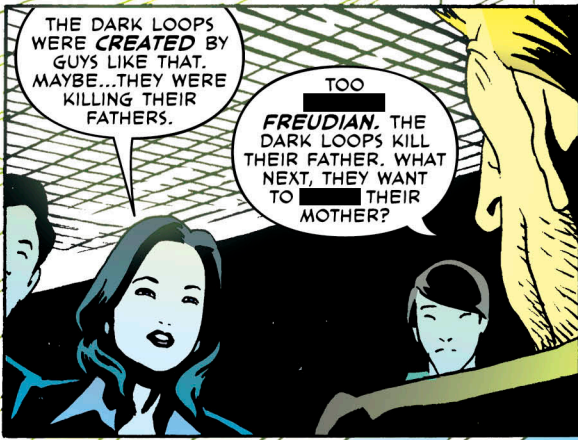
"MAYBE, MAYBE, MAYBE."

I KNEW SOME OF THE GUYS IN THAT MEETING. SOME OF THEM BELONGED TO THE NAMES. SOME OF THE BEST BRAINS IN THE BUSINESS.



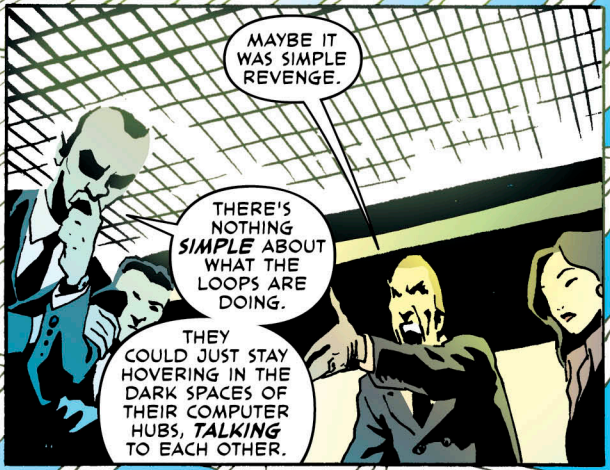
SO I ASK YOU, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. WHY DID THE DARK LOOPS WANT THEM ALL DEAD?





THE DARK LOOPS WERE **CREATED** BY GUYS LIKE THAT. MAYBE...THEY WERE KILLING THEIR FATHERS.

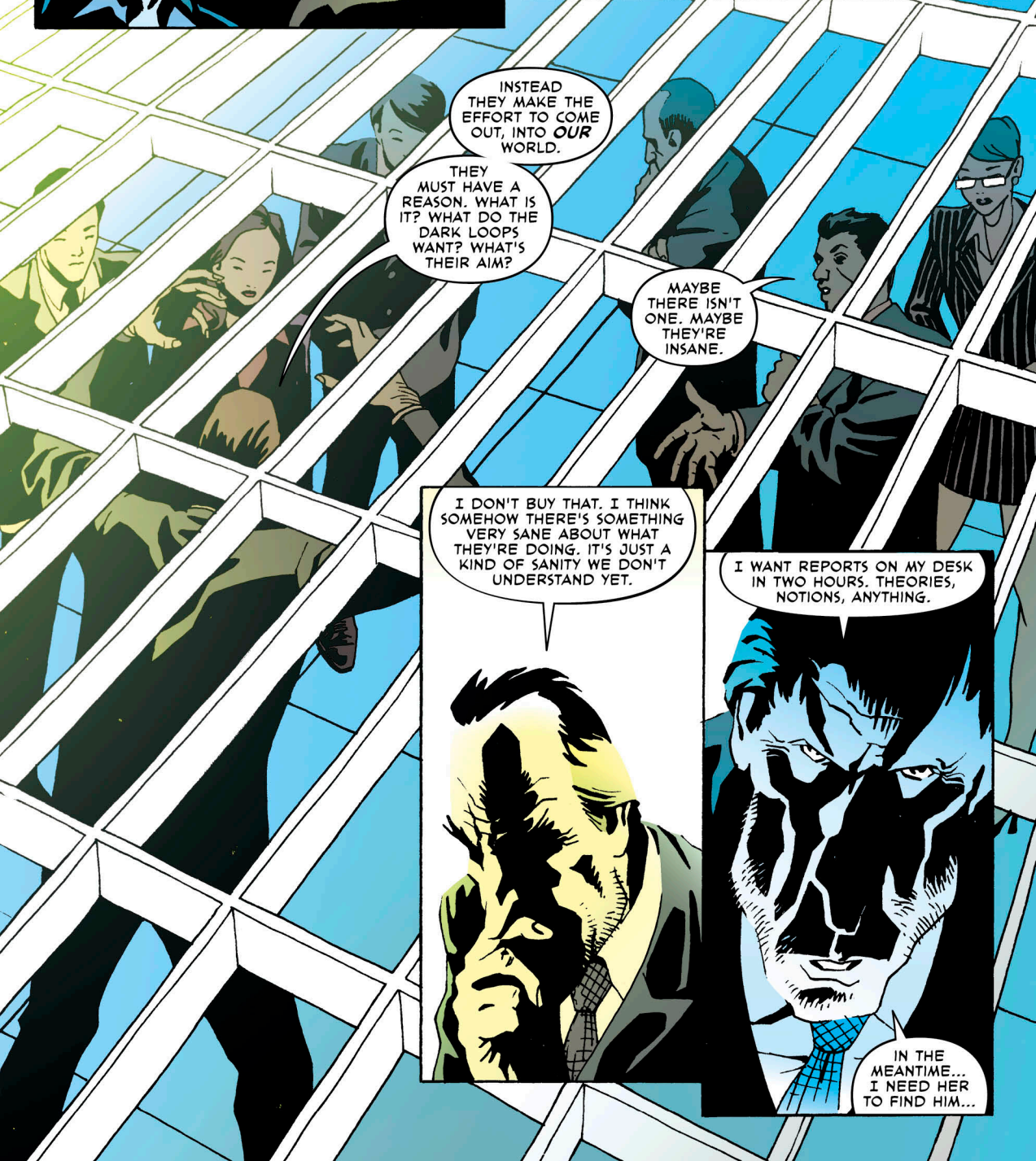
TOO
FREUDIAN. THE DARK LOOPS KILL THEIR FATHER. WHAT NEXT, THEY WANT TO **KILL** THEIR MOTHER?



MAYBE IT WAS SIMPLE REVENGE.

THERE'S NOTHING **SIMPLE** ABOUT WHAT THE LOOPS ARE DOING.

THEY COULD JUST STAY HOVERING IN THE DARK SPACES OF THEIR COMPUTER HUBS, **TALKING** TO EACH OTHER.



INSTEAD THEY MAKE THE EFFORT TO COME OUT, INTO **OUR** WORLD.

THEY MUST HAVE A REASON. WHAT IS IT? WHAT DO THE DARK LOOPS WANT? WHAT'S THEIR AIM?

MAYBE THERE ISN'T ONE. MAYBE THEY'RE **INSANE**.

I DON'T BUY THAT. I THINK SOMEHOW THERE'S SOMETHING VERY **SANE** ABOUT WHAT THEY'RE DOING. IT'S JUST A KIND OF SANITY WE DON'T UNDERSTAND YET.

I WANT REPORTS ON MY DESK IN TWO HOURS. THEORIES, NOTIONS, ANYTHING.



IN THE MEANTIME... I NEED HER TO FIND HIM...



MOVE AGAINST THE WALL, PHILIP.

IS THAT WHAT MY FATHER DISCOVERED? IS THAT THE THING THAT PUSHED HIM OVER THE EDGE?



YES, HE FOUND OUT THAT YOU WERE ALIVE AND THAT THE NAMES HAD ARRANGED IT ALL.

THAT DID IT FOR HIM. HE DECIDED TO GET OUT, TO BLOW THE WHISTLE ON THE WHOLE THING.



BUT BEFORE HE COULD, ONE OF YOU DECIDED TO KILL HIM, BY FAKING HIS SUICIDE.

HE WAS WEAK. A LIABILITY. YOU TAKE AFTER ME. I CAN SEE THAT NOW. MAYBE I'LL PUT IN A GOOD WORD FOR YOU.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

I'M GOING TO TELL KATYA THAT YOU'RE ALIVE.

I'M WARNING YOU, PHILIP. STOP.



I DOUBT WHETHER MOTHERLY LOVE WOULD PREVENT YOU FROM KILLING ME. BUT YOU DO HAVE YOUR INSTRUCTIONS.

USING BAYES THEOREM I CALCULATE THE CHANCES OF YOUR SHOOTING ME AT APPROXIMATELY SEVEN IN THREE HUNDRED. I'LL TAKE MY CHANCES.

A REAL BRAINY BASTARD.



BLAMM!