

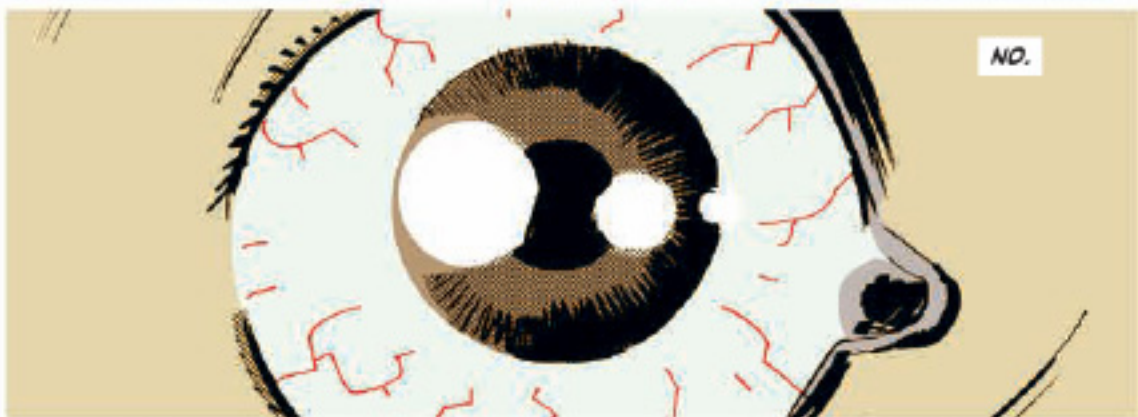
MY HEAD FEELS LIKE IT WAS [REDACTED] BY A GIANT.



EVERYTHING HURTS.
SPINNING. HARD TO BREATHE. A BLOODY ASHTRAY IN MY MOUTH.



EYES OPEN LIKE SANDPAPER.
HER HAIR SMELLS LIKE SNOW.
NOT MARIA'S HAIR...
NOT MARIA...?



NO.

WHAT DID YOU DO?
TRUTH HITS ME QUEASY--



--CHEATED ON MY GIRLFRIEND WITH A DEADLY JAPANESE ASSASSIN.

ALCOHOL. SOMETHING CHEAP WITH HIGH PERCENTAGE.

[REDACTED] EVERYTHING UP.
SOMETHING ELSE GNAWING...
SOMETHING IMPORTANT.
THE COMIC SHOP--
THE BIG SALE--



--STARTED TWO HOURS AGO!



WHERE THE [REDACTED] ARE YOU GOING?

THE BIG SALE!

NO SALE IS WORTH HOW PISSED I'LL BE IF YOU LEAVE ME HERE. [REDACTED]

SALE.

STORE MAKES MOST OF ITS MONEY ON THESE SALES.

BLAINE LIVES ON THE SALE MONEY.

BLAINE TRUSTED ME.

HATE TO LET PEOPLE DOWN THAT DEPEND ON ME--

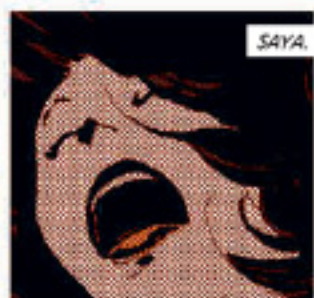


MARIA.

WHAT DID YOU DO, _____?



JESUS CHRIST--



SAYA.

SO DRUNK. STILL DRUNK. SUNLIGHT BURNS THROUGH TO MY SKULL.

MY HEAD POUNDING-- THROW MYSELF UNDER THE BUS. EASIER.



JESUS CHRIST--SAYA.

JESUS CHRIST--



MARIA WEeping IN HER ROOM.



I'M THE KIND OF PERSON I HATE.

SPARE ANY CHANGE, MAN?

NO-- SORRY-- I REALLY CANT!



SCUMBAG

GIRLS! MORE TROUBLE THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

I WAS BETTER OFF ALONE.

I WAS FINE ALONE.

SO MANY MISTAKES.



GET YOUR _____ TOGETHER--START THINKING THROUGH DECISIONS.

GLOFF!



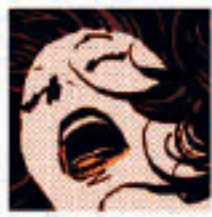
NEVER EXPERIENCED
ANYTHING LIKE THAT.



HEY
WATCH
OUT--!



HER EYES BURNED ME.
SHE SEEMED TO REALLY
KNOW EVERYTHING I
WANTED.



LIKE SHE COULD
FIX EVERYTHING.



GHA!



SHE COULD TAKE ON THE
CHORE OF BEING WITH ME.

SORRY!



SHE COULD BE GOOD
ENOUGH.

SHE COULD MAKE ME
WHOLE--

--HELP ME GET TO FREE.

LIGHTS FLASH--

WORLD GOES DIGITIZED,
LIKE STARING AT THE
SUN TOO LONG--

--ANOTHER ACID
FLASHBACK.



ONE HORRIBLE NIGHT IN
VEGAS THAT SET THIS ALL OFF.

THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO
DIE IN THAT NEON [REDACTED]
THAT INTENSE FEAR.

I'M SUCH A WEAK PUKE.

ALL THOSE YEARS TELLING
MYSELF I DIDN'T CARE--

--TOTAL

IDIOT.
BETTER OFF DEAD.

FEATURE FILM OF LAST NIGHT.
PLAYS BACK IN FLICKERS.

SOUND CATCHES UP--
GUTS TWIST.

JESUS CHRIST, TELL
ME I DIDN'T SAY IT.



I LOVE YOU.

OH, YOU
IDIOT.

JESUS CHRIST--
WHAT DID I DO?!

YOU TERRIBLE IDIOT.
YOU WEAK, NEEDY, WORTHLESS

HOW LAME DID I SOUND?



NO.

DON'T WORRY HOW
YOU SOUNDED--

--WORRY IF YOU MEANT
WHAT YOU SAID.



--YOU
KIDDIN'
ME?!

AH,
C'MON,
MAN!

COULD I EVER BE WHAT
SHE REALLY WANTS?

DO I LOVE HER?

OR DO I LOVE BEING
OBSESSED WITH HER?

SOMETHING TO TURN
MY MIND TO--

--TO KEEP IT OFF
OF THE HORROR.

JUST WANT
SOMEONE
TO CHASE.

SOMEONE TO PUSH OFF...
SOME UNOBTAINABLE THING.

MARIA LOVES ME. TAKES CARE
OF ME. KILLED CHICO FOR ME.



THE
MAN?!

BEEN
HERE FOR
HOURS!

--LOOK
LIKE

--POSER
CAN'T
OPEN THE
SHOP--

OKAY,
ALRIGHT.
RELAX!



MARIA ONCE TOLD ME THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OLD FRIENDS AND NEW FRIENDS IS THAT NEW FRIENDS JUST HAVEN'T LET YOU DOWN YET. SHE TOLD ME THAT EVERYONE HAS LET HER DOWN...
...EXCEPT FOR ME.

YOU OWE ME A SPIDER-MAN FIGHTING SABRETOOTH, MARCUS.

YOU PROMISED ME!

NOT NOW, MIKE.



AND ALL I COULD THINK WAS, "GIVE ME TIME."

YOU GUYS TRADE SINGLE CARDS?

MOVE!

--GETTING THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE--

--NEAR-MINT COPY OF MILLER'S RONIN--



I FEEL THEIR NOISE.

EVERY SCREAM, EVERY QUESTION.

A DEAFENING TORNADO OF ENTHUSIASTIC KIDS AND OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE BODY ODOR FARMERS.

SCREAMING RAZOR BLADES THROUGH MY BRAIN.



I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE HUNG OVER!

YOU TOLD ME IF I BROUGHT YOU A SANDWICH YOU'D DRAW SABRETOOTH FIGHTING SPIDER-MAN TODAY.

YOU PROMISED.

OH SHIT! OFF, MIKE.



PLEASE OFF.

BUT HE DOESN'T.

NEXT TO ME ALL DAY, GRIPING.
HOURS CREEP.
EACH ONE TAKES LONGER THAN THE LAST.
THE HANGOVER GETS WORSE.
IT'S SO HOT. WHY IS IT SO HOT?



THE SWAMP COOLER SPLUTTERS WARM MIST.
EVERY SOUND BRINGS PAIN. EVERY MOVE HURTS.
AND THEY YELL.
AND THEY BICKER OVER TRIVIA.

AND THIS IS CLEARLY VERY FINE, OVERSTREET SAYS IT'S WORTH NO MORE THAN SIX DOLLARS--



AND THEY TRY AND ARGUE WITH ME ABOUT WHO THE BEST INKER IS.
HOW LITTLE I REALLY KNOW ABOUT DOOM PATROL.
HOW MUCH BETTER PALL SMITH IS THAN JOHN BYRNE.
THEY HAGGLE OVER PEDANTIC NONSENSE IN SHRILL VOICES.



THE INDIE NERDS POP CAPS ON THE MAINSTREAM NERDS. VICE VERSA.
JUST LIKE ANYONE ELSE, PECKING ORDERS ESTABLISHED—ELITISM IN EVERY SOCIAL SUBSET.
THEY GANG UP AND SINGLE OUT.

