WATCHMEN: PART I

by Lon Turner

Based on the graphic novel

WATCHMEN

Ву

Alan Moore and David Gibbons

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FADE IN

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

(NOTE: Unless otherwise stated, scenes without a year noted occur in 2001.)

The world's most famous skyline. The World Trade Center buildings stand tall and proud.

NEWS VENDOR (O.S.) I don't know what the world's comin' to.

EXT. NEWS STAND - NIGHT

A BLACK YOUTH sits on the curb before it, ensconced in a comic book. An ugly STREET PREACHER paces before the news stand, carries a picket board which reads, "THE END IS NIGH."

The NEWS VENDOR stocks and sorts papers and magazines on the rack.

NEWS VENDOR

Country's gone to hell in a hand basket, ya ask me. I got half a mind to -- hey, kid, you read it, you buy it -- to just give up on the whole thing and move to Alaska, or Idaho or something.

STREET PREACHER Repent! The end is --

NEWS VENDOR Ah, put a lid it on it, ya know? Every night I gotta hear this?

As he continues to sort papers:

NEWS VENDOR Nothin' but freaks in this city. I'll give ya somethin' to repent over...

The SOUNDS of an altercation - glass SHATTERS, the THUDS of and SMACKS of blows struck.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Ten stories tall. From an apartment on the top floor, the SOUNDS continue.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

EDWARD BLAKE (61), muscular and sturdy for a man his age. A nasty scar on his left cheek gives him a perpetual half-grin. A rubber-gloved FIST SLAMS into his face.

Blake reels against the window. It CRACKS. Blake's assailant grabs him by the collar of his housecoat. Pinned to the lapel: a SMILEY FACE BUTTON. Blood from Blake's busted lip drips onto it.

The assailant RIPS the button off and tosses it to the floor. The assailant hoists Blake up against the window. Blake too dazed to fight back.

The assailant SLAMS Blake against the window, again and again. The window SHATTERS. Busted glass showers down with the rain.

Blake teeters on the window ledge. He looks down at the assailant. Blake's eyes don't plead. They don't beg. They sadly understand.

The assailant shoves Blake out the window.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Blake falls through the air. Hits the sidewalk ten stories down. Bizarre: his arms lay straight above his head, like a clock which shows midnight.

At the nearby news stand, the News Vendor, the Black Youth and the Street Preacher ogle the body.

GRUFF (O.S.) Helluva a brawl, ya think?

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A FOOT steps atop busted glass. Detective GRUFF, late forties, heavy-set, and Detective PRIM, younger, wellgroomed, survey Blake's apartment. The thunderstorm continues outside the window. A UNIFORMED COP stumbles about.

GRUFF Killer must have been a powerhouse. Did you see the size of the vic? Bodybuilder huge.

PRIM What do we have on him?

PRIM

GRUFF Just a name from a phone bill on the desk. "Edward Blake."

Prim checks out photos on the wall. Lots of black and white Viet Nam pics of a younger Edward Blake, pre-nasty scar. One photo: Blake shakes hands with former president Richard Nixon.

> Hey, is that --GRUFF Yup. Feature this: I think this guy Blake's a spook. PRIM Why do you say?

GRUFF Got a call before you showed. FBI's taking over within the hour.

PRIM Just like that?

GRUFF They want the place taped, sealed and cleared before they get here.

PRIM Screw 'em. They can have it. Less paperwork for us.

GRUFF

You hungry?

PRIM

I could eat.

GRUFF There's a place down the street sells those new Dr. Manhattan synthetic burgers.

PRIM

I'm game.

GRUFF Gibbons, tape it up.

UNIFORMED COP You're the boss.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW

Atop a building across the street, a SILHOUETTE watches. Rorschach's voice is guttural, monotone - the voice of a man choking on his own inner demons.

> RORSCHACH (V.O.) This city's streets are soaked in blood.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

AS SEEN THROUGH A TELESCOPE

The two detectives and the uniformed cop exit the building and slide into a police cruiser.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) When the gutters scab over, the blood will overflow. All the vermin will drown.

Gloved hands collapse the telescope and stuff it inside a trench coat. They reach into a pocket and pull out a grappling hook gun, the size of a large pistol, a compartment which houses a length of cable.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) The filth of all their sex and addiction and murder will foam up about their wastes...

FZZZZZZ! The grappling hook arcs through the air. It latches onto the window ledge of the apartment across the street, the window criss-crossed with police tape.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) ...and all the whores and politicians will look up and shout, "Save us!"

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Lights out. The grappling hook latched to the window sill. GRUNTS from outside the window. Gloved hands grasp the window ledge. The silhouette climbs up, perches atop it.

> RORSCHACH (V.O.) ...and I'll look down and whisper, "No." Name is Rorschach. And this city fears me.

A series of lighting flashes illuminate RORSCHACH, brown trench coat, fedora. He wears a white mask with black blots which constantly swirl in a symmetrical pattern, much like the tests of his namesake.

Rorschach steps off the window ledge and pulls a flashlight. He scans about the room. Notices the Smiley Face button on the floor. Picks it up, inspects the blood stain on it. Pockets it.

He checks out the photos on the wall. In one photo, Blake beams with pride at the pair of decapitated VN soldier heads he holds by their hair.

RORSCHACH

Hurm...

Rorschach inspects a tall cabinet in the corner. Opens it. Clothes on a rack. Tilts his head. A beat.

He empties the cabinet of clothes. Takes a clothes hanger, straightens it out.

Holds the hanger against the side of the cabinet, tip against the wall behind it. Pinches off the distance from the wall to the cabinet's front edge.

He measures the distance from the inner back wall of the cabinet to the cabinet's front edge. Eyes his fingers pinched on the hanger -- a good eight inches past the front edge of the cabinet.

RORSCHACH

Ehh...

Rorschach discards the clothes hanger. Feels around inside the cabinet. His fingers dance across a hidden switch. He flicks it.

A CLICK as the cabinet's false back opens. A hidden compartment. Inside, some sort of costume on a hanger, various weaponry. A black and white photo pinned to the wall.

Rorschach pulls the costume out and spreads it on the floor. Black leather torso piece with chain mail, American Flag design on the shoulder pads. Leather mask with eye and mouth holes. Smiley face button on the collar.

Rorschach plucks the photo from the compartment. He looks on the back of it.

ON THE PHOTO

Written on the back: "MINUTEMEN, FIRST ANNIVERSARY, 1965."

Rorschach turns the photo over. Several muscular men and an attractive woman in superhero costumes. Rorschach's finger slides across the photo. Stops on a man on one knee in the photo's foreground.

On the lapel of the man's costume, a smiley face button.

EXT. GHETTO - NIGHT

Rorschach shambles down the garbage-strewn sidewalk. Rain continues to pour. Rorschach's voice is gutteral, monotone -- the voice of a man choking on his own inner demons.

RORSCHACH

Journal entry, 8/9/01. Routine murder investigation of one Edward Blake. Search of living quarters yields interesting results. Evidence points to victim Edward Blake as costumed hero named The Comedian, former member of hero group The Minutemen, later a government operative contracted by CIA.

Rorschach steps over a BUM.

BUM

Hey!

RORSCHACH (V.O.) Tonight, a comedian was killed in New York. Someone knows who did it. My job: find them. Know just where to look.

INT. GHETTO BAR - NIGHT

Thug hang-out. Gang members, crooks and thieves having a gay old time. Lots of noise.

Rorschach enters. The noise dwindles to silence as he makes his way across the floor to the bar, wary patrons eyeing him all the way.

Rorschach stops at the bar. The BARTENDER freezes solid.

RORSCHACH Phil. Long time, no see.

BARTENDER M-Mr. Rorschach.. H-hey, pal. Hhaven't seen you around lately. Hhow've you, uh... (gulps) Please don't kill anybody.

Rorschach turns to the crowd.

RORSCHACH Someone murdered a man named Edward Blake. I'm investigating.

A MOUTHY CUSTOMER remarks from the crowd.

MOUTHY Investigate my jock, bitch!

A collective GASP from the crowd. All eyes turn to Mouthy, who LAUGHS as he sips from a bottle of beer. Rorschach strolls toward him. MURMURS amongst the crowd as he passes through.

Rorschach stops before Mouthy, cool and calm. An OLD MAN next to Mouthy speaks up.

OLD MAN Please, Mr. Rorschach. He's my boy, just come up from Atlanta. He don't know about you. RORSCHACH Then it's time he learned.

Mouthy cocks a thumb at Rorschach.

MOUTHY What, y'all niggas afraid o' this white-bred punk? Like that mask supposed to scare me or somethin' --

Rorschach grabs Mouthy's wrist, wraps his hand around Mouthy's thumb and effortlessly BREAKS it. Mouthy HOWLS in pain. He tries to pull his hand, to no avail. Rorschach may be a runt but he's strong as a bull.

> RORSCHACH I just broke this man's thumb. Who killed Edward Blake?

No replies. Rorschach BREAKS another finger. Mouthy SCREAMS.

RORSCHACH Now I've broken his index finger. Who killed Edward Blake?

OLD MAN Please, Mr. Rorschach, we don't know! Break all the fingers you want, we still ain't gonna know!

Rorschach surveys faces in the crowd.

RORSCHACH You know what happens if you lie to me.

OLD MAN We ain't lyin', Mr. Rorschach. Please, don't hurt my boy no more.

Rorschach studies the Old Man's face. He BREAKS one more finger then releases Mouthy and shambles off.

HOLLIS (V.O.) So there I was, walking down the aisle looking for canned food for old Axle here... HOLLIS MASON (68), handsome and virile for a man his age, sits in a rocking chair, an aged mutt in his lap.

HOLLIS I turn the corner and guess who I run into? The Screaming Skull!

DAN DREIBERG (42), strong build going soft, checks out various superhero memorabilia about the room as Hollis continues.

HOLLIS Remember him?

DAN I think I've heard you mention him.

HOLLIS

Oh, he was an ornery old cuss back in the sixties, I put him away I don't know how many times. Turns out he's reformed now. Born-again Christian, two grown kids. We traded numbers.

Dan takes a gold colored statuette of a hero called Night Owl from the mantle.

DAN Look at all this stuff. It's like a Super Hero Hard Rock Cafe.

HOLLIS Well, I've always considered myself the Elvis Presley of costumed crime fighters. Did I ever tell you about the time I laid out Captain Carnage with a single left hook?

DAN Only about a hundred times.

Dan glances aside at Hollis. Hollis's face wilts.

DAN But I never get tired of hearing it.

HOLLIS

Nah, you're right. A young man like yourself doesn't need to spend every Friday night listening to the ramblings of an old geezer like me.

DAN It's what keeps me going.

HOLLIS Horse puckie. You were a better Night Owl than I ever was.

DAN You're full of it.

HOLLIS And you're kind to humor me.

DAN

Are you kidding me? You were one of the first, you inspired me. Hell, Hollis, you were my god damn hero.

Dan sets the statuette back upon the mantle.

HOLLIS Hey, hey. Watch the language. Remember, this is the left hook that laid out Captain Carnage.

Dan grins. Then, pensive:

DAN

Hollis...do you ever miss it?

HOLLIS

The hero biz? I don't miss doing it. But I miss it being done. And that damnable Keene Act...this country was built on heroes, and look what we've become without them. Neighbors killing neighbors, drugs on every corner, kids shooting each other in school? We need a hero, right now, more than ever. Someone strong and smart and willing to do whatever it takes to set this country back to right, and save us from ourselves.

The words hit Dan like a sack of bricks.

EXT. DAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A converted dock-side warehouse. Dan's sports car -- one well suited for someone currently neck-deep in mid-life crisis -- pulls into the drive way.

Dan exits the car and heads for the front door.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Dan enters, clicks on a light. He approaches a wall adorned with a multitude of fancy tools. He pulls a series of hammers -- actually disguised levers. A secret door opens on the wall nearby.

INT. DAN'S HOUSE - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

The staircase descends deep under ground. Dan walks down.

INT. HANGAR/WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Metallic double doors slide open. Dark inside. Dan fumbles for a hanging control box. Finds it. Hits a button. A series of large overhead lights CLICK on.

A.R.C.H.I.E., a remarkable, flying super-hero transport, sits in the center of the hangar. The large, circular windows on the front give the ship the appearance of an owl.

Superhero gadgets abound -- on work benches, hanging from the wall. Dan walks through the workshop, touches various equipment as though reminiscing. He pauses before a locker with a keypad lock on it.

He punches in a code. Its doors slide open. Dan gazes inside of it, the look on his face a mixture of fondness and sadness. He walks off.

Inside the locker, his super-hero costume: brown cowl and cloak, utility belt, green body suit. The cowl resembles an owl's face.

INT. DAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dan, preoccupied, enters. Nearly jumps out of his skin at the sight of Rorschach at the kitchen table, his mask rolled up to expose his mouth. Rorschach eats beans from a can, and does a messy job of it. DAN Jesus Christ! Damn it, Rorschach, how do you keep getting in here?

RORSCHACH Good to see you, too, Night Owl.

DAN

How many times do I have to tell you? My name is Dan Drieberg.

RORSCHACH You're a hero pretending to be Dan Dreiberg. Pretending to be a loser.

DAN I'm a loser? You break into my house, you eat my food -- when was the last time you took a shower? You smell like a corpse.

RORSCHACH So does Edward Blake.

DAN

Who?

Rorschach tosses the Smiley Face button atop the kitchen table. Dan picks it up, looks it over. Notices the streak of blood on it.

DAN Is that bean juice?

RORSCHACH Yeah. Human bean juice.

Dan, repulsed, drops the button atop the table.

DAN That's not funny.

RORSCHACH Should be. It belonged to the Comedian.

Dan takes a seat across the table from Rorschach.

DAN The -- what happened? RORSCHACH Took a header out of his tenth story apartment. Wasn't his idea.

DAN Jesus. I remember when we first met the Comedian at that Minutemen party, back when you and I were partners.

RORSCHACH Remember those days. Good times. We were a good team.

DAN Yeah. What ever happened?

RORSCHACH

You quit.

Dan's face sinks. Rorschach pushes the empty bean can away, slides his mask down. Strolls off.

DAN Where are you going?

RORSCHACH May have a hero killer on our hands. Have to warn others. Taking rug from your foyer.

DAN Sure. Help yourself. Just leave out the back, okay?

Dan studies the smiley face button upon the table.

EXT. MILITARY COMPOUND - NIGHT

Heavily guarded. Razor wire on the fences. A rug flops over the razor wire. Rorschach scampers over the fence. Stealths his way past the guards.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Rorschach makes his way down a darkened corridor. He approaches a door marked "LIVING QUARTERS." He tries the handle. Locked. He pulls a lock-pick. Before he can put the pick to the key hole, the door opens. JON (O.S.) You may come in, Rorschach.

INT. LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Rorschach enters. He looks up.

JON OSTERMAN/DR. MANHATTAN, twenty feet tall. Bald, blue skin, eyes pure white, hydrogen symbol on his forehead, and completely naked.

RORSCHACH How've you been, Doc?

JON Busy. How may I help you, Rorschach?

RORSCHACH Need to talk. Easier if you were on my level.

JON Ah, yes. Forgive me.

As Jon shrinks down to his true 6'2" height:

JON I sometimes forget that my presence often startles people.

Jon turns to a chalkboard upon which is written a complex equation. Rorschach takes a handful of sugar cubes from a nearby coffee stand.

RORSCHACH Not startled. Here to tell you about death of Edward Blake. The Comedian.

JON Yes. I am already aware.

Rorschach chews a sugar cube.

RORSCHACH You're taking it well.

JON Life and death are abstracts. A human body contains the same number of particles, living or dead. (MORE) JON (cont'd) There is no discernible difference, therefore it is none of my concern.

RORSCHACH

Ehh.

JON Besides, the past, present and future are one continuous, visible stream to me. I knew of Blake's death before it happened.

RORSCHACH Knew Blake would be killed, yet did nothing to prevent it?

JON As I said, it is none of my concern.

RORSCHACH

Hurm...

LAURIE (0.S.) Careful, Jon. You're going to make Rorschach blow a gasket...

LAURIE JUSPECZYK, mid-thirties, flowing hair, stunningly attractive, saunters into the room.

LAURIE ...and I think he's blown more than he can spare already.

Jon remains focused on the equation.

RORSCHACH Silk Spectre. Looking fit.

Rorschach eats another sugar cube.

LAURIE

The name is Juspeczyk. I never liked that stupid super-hero name. What are you doing here, and when are you leaving?

RORSCHACH Came to tell you about death of Edward -- LAURIE

Save your breath. Jon already told me. Good riddance, as far as I'm concerned.

RORSCHACH Murder of hero nothing to be taken lightly.

LAURIE Blake was no hero. He was a monster. You know what he did.

RORSCHACH Not here to bicker over a fellow hero's moral lapses --

LAURIE Moral lapses?! The son of a bitch raped my mother and broke her ribs! He almost killed her!

RORSCHACH Sally Juspeczyk, first Silk Spectre. Strong woman. Healed up well.

LAURIE Go to hell, you psycho. Jon, get him out of here!

Jon turns to Rorschach.

JON You seem to be upsetting Laurie, Rorschach. I think you should leave.

RORSCHACH Came to warn you, may be a hero killer on the loose. Already spoke to Dan Drieberg. We should --

JON Now, Rorschach. I won't ask again.

RORSCHACH No. Here for a reason. Not leaving until I've --

Jon waves his hand. A brilliant FLASH of blue light.

Rorschach appears in another flash of blue light.

RORSCHACH

-- had my say.

Rorschach glances around, surprised to find himself outside again.

RORSCHACH

Hurm...

He thrusts his hands into his pockets and plods off.

INT. LIVING QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Jon ponders the equation on the chalk board. Laurie runs a hand through her hair.

LAURIE I never liked that psychopath. I don't like his creepy mask, I don't like his stink and I don't like that monotone voice of his.

Laurie drops to a seat on a sofa. Jon continues to ponder the equation.

LAURIE He mentioned Dan Dreiberg. We haven't seen Dan in years. Maybe we should call him up, invite him to dinner.

Beat.

LAURIE

Jon?

JON I solve this equation three hours and four minutes from now.

LAURIE Fascinating. I'm going to call Dan. JON

You'll have the pasta primavera. Dan will have the shellfish, then complain of an upset stomach. In three seconds you will storm off --

LAURIE Oh, I hate when you do that!

Laurie storms off.

JON -- and hit your head on the book shelf.

A THUD off screen.

LAURIE (O.S.) Ow! Damn it, Jon, that's not funny!

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Laurie and Dan chit-chat over dinner. Laurie's plate: pasta primavera. Dan's plate: half-eaten order of shellfish.

LAURIE

I really appreciate you meeting me on such short notice, Dan. I had to get out of there.

DAN

I take it things aren't well with you and Jon?

LAURIE You'd think someone with the power of God would understand the human condition. But it's like living with a void. Throw in a visit from Rorschach...

DAN I guess he told you about his little theory?

LAURIE Among other things.

DAN What do you think?

LAURIE Rorschach's as loony tunes as they come, but...he did seem sincere. DAN Rorschach's always been an oddball, and the last ten years have made him worse. But he's probably the best investigator I've ever seen. If he thinks there's something to this hero killer theory ... Dan stifles a burp, rubs his stomach. DAN Sorry. My stomach...think I'll step out for some air. Laurie rolls her eyes. EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER Dan and Laurie, umbrellas protecting them from the storm, look out over the city. The restaurant, fifteen stories up, provides a lush view. DAN Quite a sight, eh? LAURIE Beautiful. DAN Laurie... LAURIE Hm? DAN Do you miss it? LAURIE Miss what? DAN You know. Being a hero. LAURIE I only did it because my God, no. mother forced it on me. I was never really serious about it. Still, there were some laughs.

DAN (laughs) Yeah. Oh! Remember that one quy, Captain Carnage? Became a villain because he liked getting beat up? LAURIE Right! Ha ha! First time I fought him I didn't know about his little fetish. I'm hitting him, and he starts panting. I'm thinking, "Huh. He's sure breathing funny..." DAN I caught him trying to rob a jeweler, but Mason had warned me about him. I walked away. He followed me for three blocks, going, "Punish me! Hurt me!" I'm like, "Get the hell away from me, you pervert!" Laurie BURSTS into laughter. Dan grins along. LAURIE God, that felt good. I haven't laughed in so long... DAN Why not? LAURIE Well, being cooped up with Jon all the time in that damn compound, for one. I don't know. Maybe it's just the world in general. It's so dark these days, so angry. No one laughs anymore. DAN What do you expect? Dan leans against the railing and stares out over the city. DAN The Comedian is dead. EXT. VEIDT ENTERPRISES - NIGHT A gleaming, glistening skyscraper. Its mirrored exterior

reflects all that surrounds it.

Egyptian decor. ADRIAN VEIDT (44), impeccable, fiercely intelligent, scans paperwork at his desk. Action figures bearing his likeness in a flashy superhero costume adorn his desk.

The thunderstorm rages outside. Lightning flashes, illuminates Rorschach in an opened floor-to-ceiling window behind Veidt. Veidt raises his head.

VEIDT

Rorschach.

RORSCHACH

Veidt.

Rorschach steps into the office from the window.

RORSCHACH How is the great Ozymandias these days?

VEIDT You know I gave that up. Call me "Adrian."

RORSCHACH Feminine name. I'll stick with Veidt.

VEIDT What do you want, Rorschach?

RORSCHACH Investigating a homicide. Edward Blake. AKA The Comedian.

VEIDT

What?

RORSCHACH Ten story swan dive. I score him a 9 for form.

VEIDT Do you know who did it?

RORSCHACH Thought you could tell me. VEIDT How would I know?

RORSCHACH You're supposed to be smartest man in the world. Thought you knew everything.

VEIDT

Well I know you, so I'll assume you've already developed a theory. Let me guess: someone is targeting former costumed heroes?

RORSCHACH

Now there's those brains we're always hearing about.

VEIDT

Thank my PR men. I never claimed to be anyone special. As for The Comedian, he wasn't the most well liked person in the world. It could have been any number of people. A former foe, the Vietnamese --

RORSCHACH

Possible. Not probable. Hero killer, sound theory.

VEIDT

If you say so.

RORSCHACH

Won't waste time arguing. Came to warn you so you don't end up smartest man in the morgue.

Rorschach notices the action figures. Picks one up, studies it.

VEIDT Rorschach. I know we've never really gotten along --

RORSCHACH Keene Act turned you yellow. Not a fan of cowards.

VEIDT I went public before the Keene Act was even proposed.

RORSCHACH

Good timing. Saw it coming?

VEIDT

I sensed the end, yes. The riots proved my suspicions correct. The heroes had worn out their welcome. The country turned against us. We could have fought it, but we wouldn't have won.

RORSCHACH

Making excuses. Admit to cowardice, you'll feel better.

Veidt smirks.

VEIDT Admit yourself. Why the full-head mask? Afraid of how people might react to your face...Walter?

Rorschach broils.

RORSCHACH

(re: the action figure) Fitting legacy, Veidt. When the hero killer gets you, the kids will have these to remind them of Ozymandias, world's smartest coward. Good resemblance, except one thing: crotch is too big. Not like you at all.

Rorschach drops the action figure atop the desk and heads for the window. Veidt leans back in his seat, pensive.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) Journal entry two, 8/9/01...

EXT. ROOF TOP - NIGHT

Rorschach sits atop a roof, scribbles into an aged, leatherbound journal on his lap.

> RORSCHACH (V.O.) Made contact with former Watchmen to warn about hero killer theory. Seems I'm the only one who still cares about evil in the world.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Dan sits before the locker with his old costume inside. He looks depressed.

> RORSCHACH (V.O.) Dan Drieberg, the second Night Owl. Great hero gone soft. Spends his nights pouting in his basement.

B) Laurie lays in bed and stares at Jon, who stares out the window and studies the stars.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) Jon Osterman and Laurie Juspeczyk, Dr. Manhattan and the second Silk Spectre. Osterman losing touch with humanity. Juspeczyk, stronger than I remember. More like her mother than she knows.

C) Adrian Veidt in his office before the floor-to-ceiling window. Lost in thought.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) Adrian Veidt. Smartest man in the world. Also smartest possible homosexual. Must remember to investigate further.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Rorschach holds up the photo he took from Edward Blake's apartment.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) No need to warn The Minutemen.

ON THE PHOTO

A muscular man in a stylized chain-mail outfit and an eye mask.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) The first Night Owl. Quit the hero biz to open a garage and write book about life as costumed hero.

A large, powerfully built man in a cowl, a hangman's noose dangles around his neck.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) Hooded Justice. Dead, 1966. Body found in Hudson Bay. Killer unknown.

A handsome, blonde haired man in a costume bearing a United States Flag motif.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) Captain Metropolis. Decapitated, car wreck, 1984.

A short man, his costume consists of a pair of large wings.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) Moth Man. Institutionalized, 1987. Eats crayons and makes sculptures with own feces.

A beautiful woman, skin-tight and exposing costume.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) The first Silk spectre, Sally Juspeczyk, Laurie's mother. Retirement home in Florida.

The kneeling man with the smiley face button on the lapel of his costume.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) And The Comedian. Only Minuteman to remain operative after group disbanded.

BACK TO SCENE

Rorschach, deep in thought.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) Death of Comedian a sign. Dark times ahead. Been through dark times before.

FILM FOOTAGE

LAPD officers beat Rodney King.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) 1991. Police beat negro speeder to near-death. Caught on video. 1992. Trial. The cops skate. City didn't take it well... EXT. LOS ANGELES - 1992

The LA Riots. Mayhem on the streets.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) Night Owl's idea: fly over and help contain the damage. Comedian, hungry for action, goes along...

A.R.C.H.I.E. lowers from a cloud of smoke and hovers before a group of rioters armed with bricks, sticks and anything else which can be used as a weapon.

The Comedian, in his black leather suit and mask, armed, stands atop the ship. He wears a commo headset.

Night Owl, at the controls, visible through the ship's large front windows, also wears a commo headset. In the ship behind him, the rest of the Watchmen -- Rorschach, Ozymandias, Dr. Manhattan, Silk Spectre -- watch on.

> NIGHT OWL (FILTERED) Hold tight, Comedian. Trying to steady.

COMEDIAN No rush, junior. We got all night to play.

NIGHT OWL (FILTERED) We're not here to play, we're here to help. Don't do anything crazy. (over PA) Please, may I have your attention, citizens. If everyone would just clear the streets --

RIOTER #1 Ain't right! Ain't fair!

RIOTER #2 We just wanted justice!

RIOTER #3 Go back to New York, pigs!

The rioters chant en masse: PIGS, PIGS, PIGS...

NIGHT OWL (FILTERED) This isn't working. I'm pulling back. COMEDIAN We ain't goin' nowhere. (to rioters) Back to your huts, jungle bunnies! I got rubber bullets and tear gas, and --

A thrown glass bottle SHATTERS off of Comedian's head. Rioters roar. Comedian, furious, wipes liquid from his mask.

> COMEDIAN Think that's funny? Well, the Comedian says...the joke's on you!

Comedian opens fire on the crowd. Dozens feel the penetrating sting of rubber bullets.

NIGHT OWL (FILTERED) Comedian, what the hell are you doing?!

COMEDIAN Shut up, bird boy, and just keep 'er steady...

The Comedian continues his assault on the rioters, enjoying every second of it.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) Fifty dead because of Comedian's methods. Lawsuits followed.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - 1992

A POLITICIAN rants at a podium before an audience of hundreds. Behind him, a banner which reads "SUPPORT THE KEENE ACT! KEEP OUR STREETS SAFE!"

RORSCHACH (V.O.) Keene Act proposes ban on costumed crime fighters as threat to public safety. Three months later, Keene Act passed.

EXT. VARIOUS CITIES - 1992

Billboard workers paste displays which show in-costume mug shots of The Watchmen, the word "BANNED" prominent on the display.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) Heroes shamed. Night Owl retires. Ozymandias avoids controversy by coming out of hero closet early. Comedian recruited by CIA. Omnipotent Jon Osterman remanded to hidden military compound, lover Laurie Juspeczyk urged to live with him, maintain his ties to humanity. But me...

EXT. ROOF TOP - NIGHT

Rorschach stands atop the roof and looks out across the city.

RORSCHACH (V.O.) I live to defy the Keene Act. Branded outlaw. Wanted by police. They call me a menace. I don't care. Crime must be punished, at all costs. On this, I will never compromise. Not even in the face of Armageddon.

He slides the photo into his journal...

RORSCHACH (V.O.)

Never.

... and SNAPS the journal closed.

AGAINST BLACK, TITLE CARD:

"At midnight, all the agents and superhuman crew go out and round up everyone who knows more than they do."

- Bob Dylan

TO BE CONTINUED...