

VERTIGO
DC COMICS

WARREN ELLIS • DARICK ROBERTSON • RODNEY RAMOS

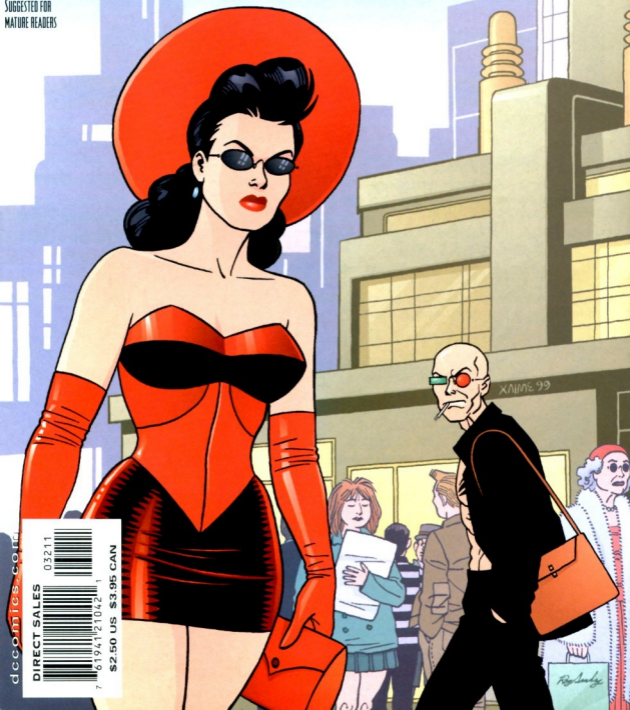
NO. 32
APR 00

***** LATE EDITION *****

TRANSMETROPOLITAN

Having... its kind of excitement... at the notion of a new venue, we are also... be... FORAYS

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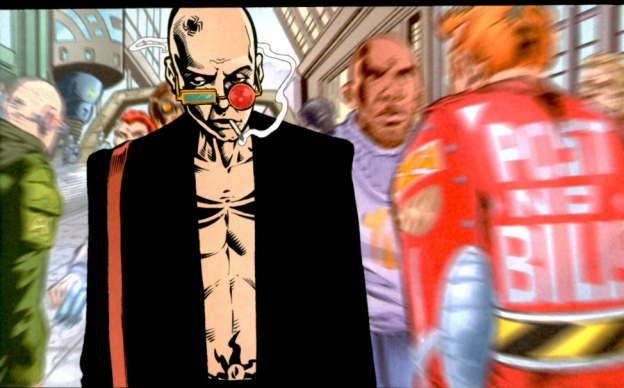


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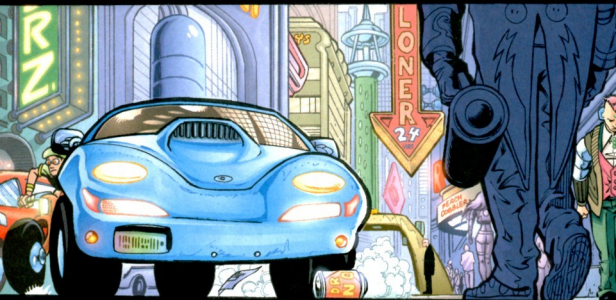
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"Spider boy." This is how it's become. They all know me. Familiarity breeding amiable contempt. Celebrity hack. Merchandise line. Column that everyone pretends to read, après the inevitable backlash. Column that's been made meaningless by the quiet censorship apparatus turned on it. Already had one number spiked.



Do they know? I mean, it's bad enough the media have made me a defanged, tamed thing that they can pet on television and on toy store shelves. But do they know that there's someone in the White House with a D-notice stamp just waiting for me to step out of line again?



Here I am: Spider Jerusalem, media element, TV celebrity, quotable, that wild and crazy guy who does that controversial muckraking column that no one really reads...lost in the mix.

Another face in the crowd.



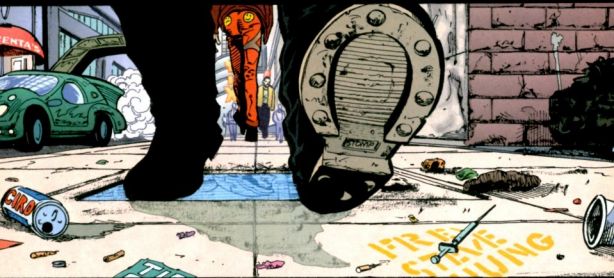
I really have to do something about this.



I've faced problems like this before. If I could get out of Prague after the terrible night of the telephone with Royce delirious and tripping from the venerable ergot infection in a car full of transsexual temple whores from the Mongolian Church of Howling Genitals, then I can get out of this...



God, what a frightening afternoon that was...a nightmare of fluorescent breasts and sentient ejaculate that wiggled all over the upholstery and sang old show tunes...



Do what I always do.
Get the City under my feet.
Become alive again.



I only ever experience this City properly on the street. It only speaks to me here. The TV is too managed, the feedsites too much like a stage, the goddamn gated community too much like living in a paranoid middle-class bubble where everyone has fever dreams of dirty nasty City people bursting the wall in by sheer pressure of numbers crowded up against it.



Just let it talk, in all its languages: the migratory patterns of cars; the scratchmix of brand names in the comet's tail of perfumes trailing the office girls headed out for lunch; the snap and crackle and teenage distort of musics clashing like gangs in the high apartment block windows...



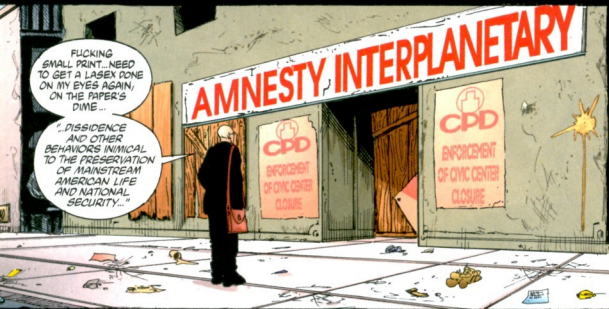
...one of those little pauses in the conversation of the City, then; a sudden unexpected quiet as everyone stopped to take a breath, and I get one of those little heart-leaps as a girl moves my way, I fall in love for ten seconds the way you do when you see one of those faces, those eyes...



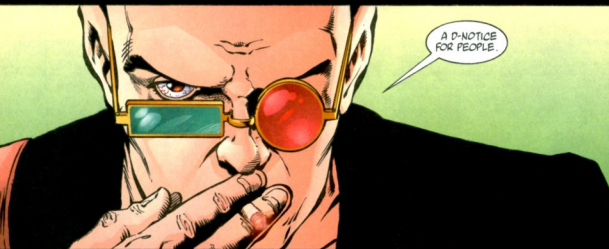
...Held breath for a moment of eye contact that burns into memory - a face I could look at for the rest of my life - and then she's walked by, the City resumes, fade up chatter and music -



-*Reverbstorm* guitars, Brazilian girls kissing on the corner with their flushed electric skins receiving passing new soap operas from a low-orbit pirate TV sat. These are the ways my green city moves, and I learn to read her every strange dance step...



And I don't like it. There's dissonance, hurried moves, panicky missteps. The tone of the City is changing. Like we've all wandered into the wrong film. We're dressed for our kitchen sink slice-of-life drama, but the lighting's too harsh, the sets too angular and paranoid..



Slap it on us **all**, take all our power away, don't let us talk, deport our nasty ideas about fairness and truth.

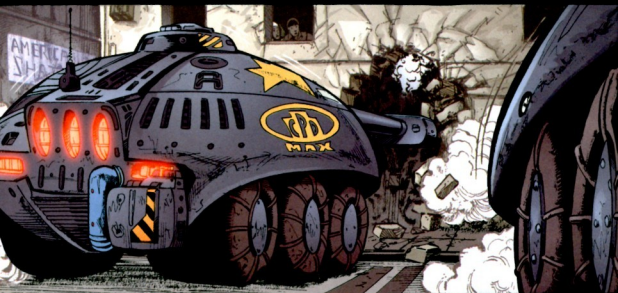
No. I'm not sitting still for this. I've been wrong-footed by these bastards for too long - time to start moving forward, march on a road of bones.



Behind him, there's a terrible grinding noise; machines overshouting the various musics and voices emanating from the Fairmead apartment block. I remember it from a few years back; it was taken over by squatters when Civic Center first moved all the inhabitants so the place could be renovated, then reallocated the renovation money.



Police tanks are supposed to be saved for massive riot control or civil war. We're not supposed to see them just trundling down the fucking street.



Oh, hell. They're going to try and drive the squatters out...

Hold everything. Aren't they supposed to give some kind of official request or warning **before** they start ramming the frontage?



They're not going to do this, surely...it's abandoned housing or the streets for the majority of these poor fuckers, and there's a whole area of the law that's seen to condone squatting in circumstances like these...



And a whole area that doesn't. Which side you enforce depends on how much of a prick you feel like being today.



Not even a fight. These people spend a lot of time on the street, watching, listening, taking the city in. They know things are changing.

Time was, there'd be press here, bystanders, witnesses. There'd be uncertainty in the police ranks, only the obvious psychopaths actually eager to rush in and bludgeon innocent people who were just looking for somewhere dry to live...



The rules have changed.



There they go; off to life on the streets, with its attendant beatings and horrors and probable ending of being slashed to death with a blunt butter knife and then stripped for their clothes...or life in some ill-managed charity refuge where they'll get anally raped nightly by large mentally-ill men called George...



And why not? It'll get D-noticed. But I'll keep it in the shades' picture memory anyway. You never know when you'll have a use for these things.

Time to stop acting like a coddled diarist or a cowed reporter.



That's right, you take a good long look, you fuckers...you all know it's going to be a matter of time before old Spider finds a way to give you shit, just a matter of time...I've got all day in a fucking penthouse to think up ways to make your lives miserable...



Strong Brazilian coffee, a plate of Singaporean dolphin curry, frozen German potato Schnapps; food to watch the world go by.

Okay, it may not sound like much to you, but I bet you weren't raised on dock lizard stew, lizard burgers, lizard curry, sweet and sour lizard and lizard candy, were you?



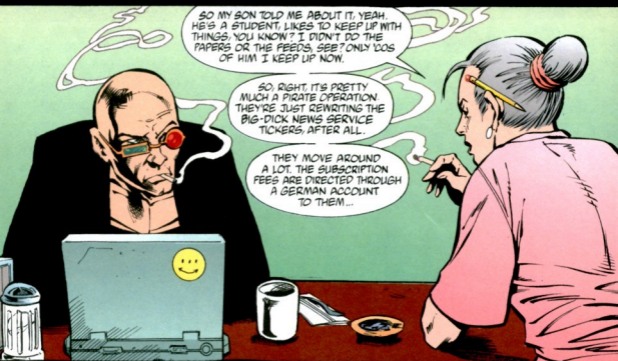
The Hole.

Channon's subscribed to that.
We talked about it a couple of years ago...



CHEAP FEEDSITE OUT OF LUGH BEND, OVER ON THE WEST SIDE. THEY JUST DO NEWS DIGESTS AND ARCHIVES, WITH MOST OF THE MAIN NEWSFEEDS' BIASES BOILED OUT.

MY DAD BOUGHT ME A THREE-YEAR ACCOUNT, BUT I DON'T USE IT MUCH. IT'S KIND OF BORING, JUST BASIC TEXT. I LIKE AMFEED BETTER.



SO MY SON TOLD ME ABOUT IT, YEAH. HE'S A STUDENT, LIKES TO KEEP UP WITH THINGS, YOU KNOW? I DIDN'T DO THE PAPERS OR THE FEEDS, SEE? ONLY 'COS OF HIM I KEEP UP NOW.

SO, RIGHT, IT'S PRETTY MUCH A PIRATE OPERATION. THEY'RE JUST REWRITING THE BIG-DICK NEWS SERVICE TICKERS, AFTER ALL.

THEY MOVE AROUND A LOT. THE SUBSCRIPTION FEES ARE DIRECTED THROUGH A GERMAN ACCOUNT TO THEM...

I wonder.



SEARCH: I WANT A CURRENT UPLOAD LOCATION FOR FEEDSITE "THE HOLE."

LOCATED. THIS LOCATION IS GOOD FOR ANOTHER FIFTEEN MINUTES; IT'S ON A RANDOM WANDERCYCLE THROUGH THE CITY NET.

FINE. SEND THEM THE COLUMN MARKED UNPUB-ONE, ALONG WITH MY CARD AND AUTHENTICATION DOCUMENTS. ACTIVATE PHONE TOOLS, AND KEEP 'EM OPEN.

What I'm going to do now changes everything.



SPIDER
 FILE EDIT PORTAL TRAVEL SURF CASCADE EVADE SEEK
 [Icons: skull, gun, key, padlock, person, cross, star, arrow, wavy line, globe, play, stop, back, forward, smiley face]



It's been a while since anyone tried to kill me.

A little less than two hours ago, CPD tried to silence the critics of their handling of the Lockwood case in a fairly original manner. They rounded them up and shot them. At this point, I have no idea how many casualties there are. I don't have time for that.

Because you need to know, now, that CPD have finally become unglued. They cannot survive this act of ultimate brutality. We cannot let them survive it.

WHO IS THIS?

WHO'D YOU THINK IT IS?

YOU'RE REALLY SPIDER JERUSALEM?

YEAH. AND THAT'S REALLY A D-NOTICED COLUMN.

WANT IT?

Just like that. No going back.



Get the city under my feet.

Become alive again.



Alive and angry and directed.

I'm not pretending that everything the Smiler's doing is all about me. That'd be insane, and I'm not that far gone yet. Dante Street was just killing a few birds with one stone, not just - perhaps not even - a shot at me. But it was a clear message. He's prepared to delete the first amendment. He's prepared to kill dissenting voices.



He's prepared to do anything to get what he wants

Well, *newsflash*:

So am I.



ARE D-NOTICES ILLEGAL? WELL, HAD YOU HEARD OF THEM BEFORE MY BANNED COLUMN GOT STOLEN AND GIVEN TO THE HOLE? NO. THEY DON'T WANT TO CALL ATTENTION TO IT. WHY?

I MEAN, I NEVER SIGNED A NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT, BUT IT WAS MADE FAIRLY PLAIN TO ME THAT DISCUSSING THAT COLUMN AND ITS CONTENTS WOULD ALSO GARNER A D-NOTICE.

THE INTERESTING QUESTION HERE IS: NOW THE COLUMN'S OUT, WILL THEY HIT ALL OF YOU WITH D-NOTICES WHEN YOU RUN THESE INTERVIEWS?

YES. THEY DIRECTLY CONTRAVENE THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH STATUTES, OBVIOUSLY. WHAT DID MY EDITOR SAY?

See how good I'm being? No nasty words, not too many unchecked run-on sentences, chopped conventional language. Not the Spider the media have given them, you see. Not a cartoon monster. They have to take me more seriously because I appear to be human.



MY EDITOR'S A GOOD MAN.



The interviews go on and on, and eventually the booze and the drugs and the tiredness lead me to start slipping. Once I convince them the young Paramedia 9 journo not to print the bit about squatting over the Smiler's chained-down head and releasing out monster turds into his pinned-open mouth until he dies, I go outside for a little air...



I hear them before I see them; the signature low growl of a CPD squad car. They slow down as they move towards me...slide past at a crawl, looking at me, making very direct eye contact, sending a message...

This is all they know. They've beaten me up and probably tried to kill me and this is what it comes down to; giving me that "I know where you live look" on the street in the early evening.



EVENING, OFFICERS.

KEEPING
THE STREETS SAFE
FROM THE LIKES
OF ME?

BE
SEEING
YOU.

They assume, like most people, that fear will do the trick. Fear will keep everyone in place. Fear will keep everyone distracted from what's really going on.

Let him know we can beat him up, let him know we could have killed him, let him know we can destroy him, let the fear shrivel him up. Fuck that. I'm not afraid of them. They're afraid of me.



They're afraid of the truth.



WWE
*** LATE EDITION ***
TRANSMETROPOLITAN
off the expansion of those times
mark her seal

"The most dangerous man, to any government, is the man who is able to think things out for himself, without regard to the prevailing superstitions and taboos. Almost inevitably he comes to the conclusion that the government he lives under is dishonest, insane and intolerable, and so, if he is romantic, he tries to change it. And even if he is not romantic personally he is very apt to spread discontent among those who are."

H.L. Mencken
Smart Set Magazine
December 1919

