

VERTIGO
DC COMICS

WARREN ELLIS • DARICK ROBERTSON • RODNEY RAMOS

No. 40
JAN 01



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

TRANSMETROPOLITAN

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You can let yourself forget that they're just kids so easily.



LONG PIG

LONG PIG

I DON'T REMEMBER CHRISTMAS.

I CURSE BY ACCIDENT, KNOW WHAT I MEAN? BUT MY MOM, SHE'D JUST FUCKING SHRIEK AND PUT SHIT DOWN MY THROAT. SOAP, WASHING BLOCKS, VINEGAR, OIL...

MY MOM SAID I RAPED MY SISTER BUT I DIDN'T. I JUST TOUCHED HER AND THEN WE FELL ASLEEP?

THAT'S WHEN I GOT TAKEN INTO CARE.

HAVEN'T KNOWN MY MOM SINCE. SHE DON'T WANT TO KNOW ME NO MORE.

HAVEN'T SEEN MY SISTER EITHER.

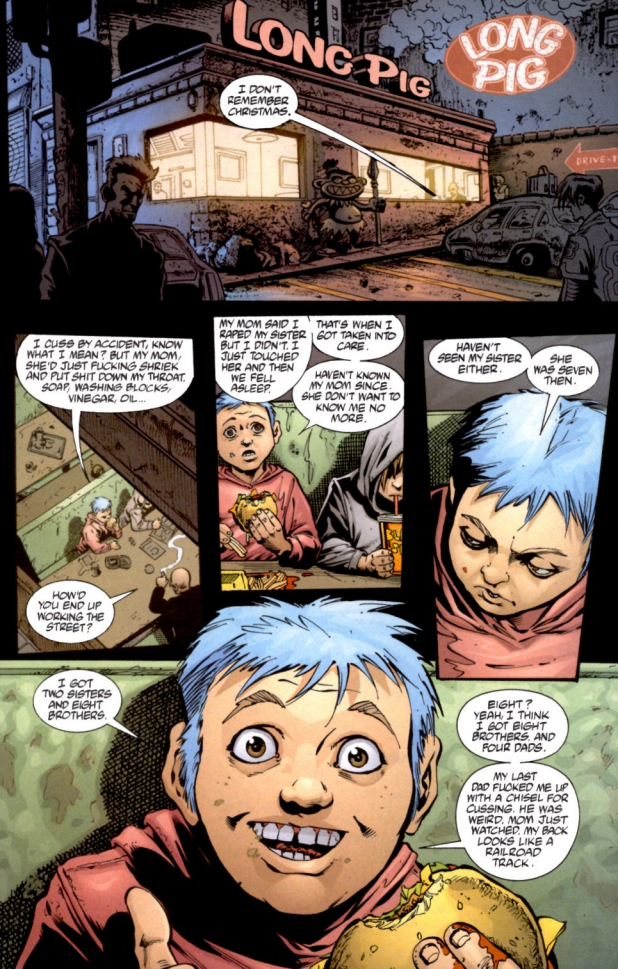
SHE WAS SEVEN THEN.

HOW'D YOU END UP WORKING THE STREET?

I GOT TWO SISTERS AND EIGHT BROTHERS.

EIGHT? YEAH. I THINK I GOT EIGHT BROTHERS AND FOUR DADS.

MY LAST DAD FLUCKED ME UP WITH A CHISEL FOR CURSSING. HE WAS WEIRD. MOM JUST WATCHED. MY BACK LOOKS LIKE A RAILROAD TRACK.





SO THEY PUT YOU IN A CHILDREN'S HOME? WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?



BEEEN THERE A WEEK WHEN THIS BIG KID TRAPS ME IN A LAUNDRY CLOSET AND DOES IT TO ME FROM BEHIND.



HE LOCKED THE DOOR AND BRACED SHIT UP AGAINST IT AND DID IT ALL TO ME.

THE STAFF WENT AFESHIT, HAD TO LASER OUT THE LOCK AND KICK IN A WINDOW TO GET HIM OFF ME.

MUSTA LOOKED FUCKING FUNNY, MATT...



AFTER THAT, HE DID IT TO ME ALL THE TIME AND I JUST LET HIM.

WHAT THE FUCK, YOU KNOW? WHAT YOU GONNA DO?

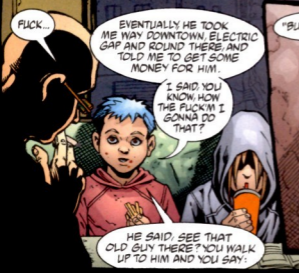
HE WAS FIFTEEN, YOU KNOW? BIG KID.

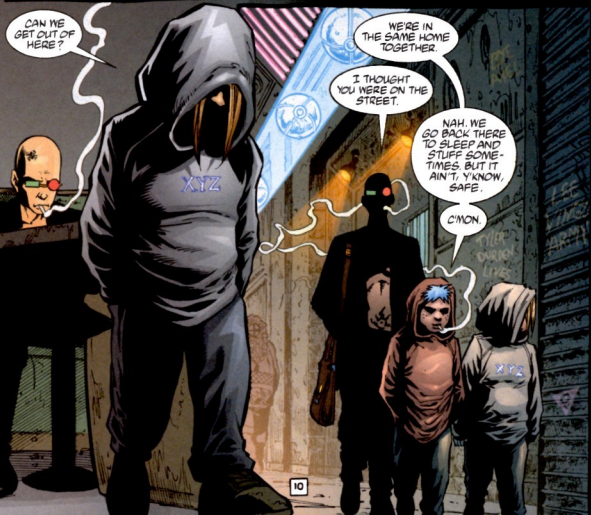


HOW OLD ARE YOU?



ELEVEN.
I WAS NINE THEN.







C'MON WHERE?

YOU'RE FAMOUS, MAN. WANT PEOPLE TO SEE ME WITH YOU.

YOU'RE UP FOR IT, RIGHT?



SURE.



WHERE WE GOING?

K ROAD.

WHAT'S ON THE K ROAD?

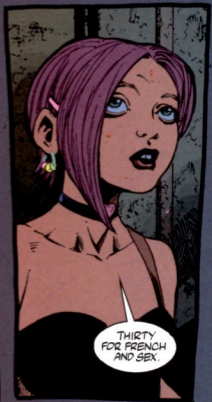


THE PEOPLE WE KNOW, MAN.

FROM THE HOMES.

LOTS OF US NEED MONEY FOR SMOKES AND SHIT.









SHIT...

OH, THOSE TWO ARE TERRIBLE. GOD KNOWS WHAT THEY THINK THEY NEED THE MONEY FOR.



DRUGS?

OH, THEY GET FUCKED UP A LOT, SURE, BUT WHO DON'T?

YOU TELL ME. ARE YOU USING?



WE'RE ALL "USING," DEAR.



OH, EXCEPT HER. HA.

WHO'S THAT?

TAMIKA'S MOM.



SHE KNOWS SHE CAN'T STOP TAMIKA WORKING, BUT SHE THINKS SHE CAN DO MORE THAN JUST SIT AT HOME, YOU KNOW?

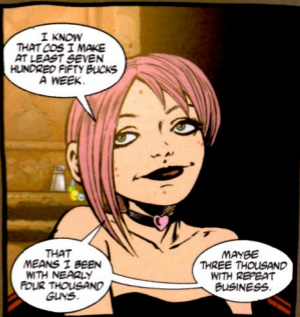
SO SHE KEEPS TAM COMPANY BETWEEN JOBS AND WRITES DOWN THE LICENSE PLATE NUMBERS OF THE CARS SHE GETS INTO.



I BEEN THINKING ABOUT THIS.

I'VE BEEN WORKING SINCE I WAS ELEVEN.

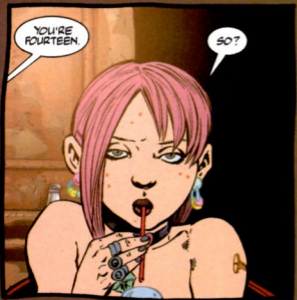
I NEVER GOT MATH, BUT, SEE, I MAKE AT LEAST THIRTY BUCKS PER JOHN. I DO AT LEAST TWENTY-FIVE A WEEK.



I KNOW THAT COS I MAKE AT LEAST SEVEN HUNDRED FIFTY BUCKS A WEEK.

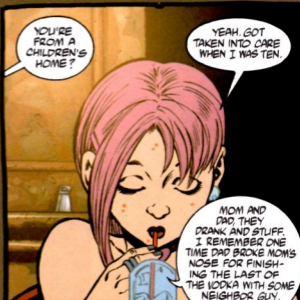
THAT MEANS I BEEN WITH NEARLY FOUR THOUSAND GUYS.

MAYBE THREE THOUSAND WITH REPEAT BUSINESS.



YOU'RE FOURTEEN.

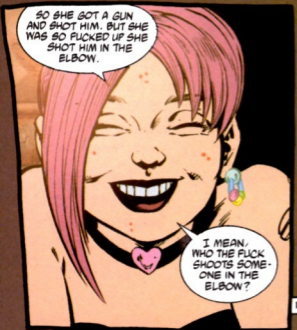
SO?



YOU'RE FROM A CHILDREN'S HOME?

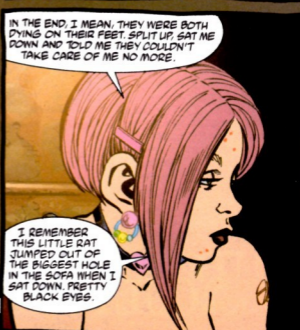
YEAH. GOT TAKEN INTO CARE WHEN I WAS TEN.

MOM AND DAD, THEY DRANK AND STUFF. I REMEMBER ONE TIME DAD BROKE MOM'S NOSE FOR FINISHING THE LAST OF THE VODKA WITH SOME NEIGHBOR GUY.



SO SHE GOT A GUN AND SHOT HIM. BUT SHE WAS SO FUCKED UP SHE SHOT HIM IN THE ELBOW.

I MEAN, WHO THE FUCK SHOTS SOMEONE IN THE ELBOW?



IN THE END, I MEAN, THEY WERE BOTH DYING ON THEIR FEET. SPLIT UP, SAT ME DOWN AND TOLD ME THEY COULDN'T TAKE CARE OF ME NO MORE.

I REMEMBER THIS LITTLE RAT JUMPED OUT OF THE BIGGEST HOLE IN THE SOFA WHEN I SAT DOWN. PRETTY BLACK EYES.



SO I GOT PUT IN A HOME.

FIRST NIGHT I WAS THERE, I GOT THE SHIT KICKED OUT OF ME BY THE OTHER KIDS.

NEXT MORNING, HAD MY FIRST PERIOD.



I RAN OFF A FEW TIMES. GOT BROUGHT BACK.

STARTED JUST STAYING AWAY ALL DAY AND GOING BACK AT NIGHTS.

MET NATALIE-- SHE'S EIGHTEEN-- SAID SHE KNEW HOW I COULD EARN SOME MONEY.



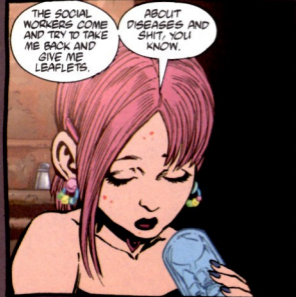
I THOUGHT, Y'KNOW, THAT MIGHT FUCK WITH THE SOCIAL WORKERS ENOUGH THAT THEY'D LEAVE ME ALONE.



I PUKE ON MY FIRST JOHN. RIGHT WHERE YOU WOULDN'T WANT ME TO PUKE, TOO.

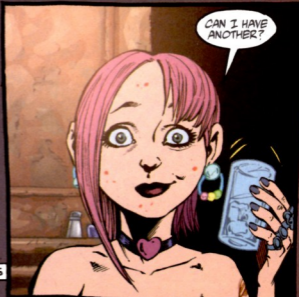
NATALIE BEAT THE SHIT OUT OF ME.

BUT THE SECOND ONE WAS EASY. MOVED IN WITH NATALIE AFTER THAT.



THE SOCIAL WORKERS COME AND TRY TO TAKE ME BACK AND GIVE ME LEAFLETS.

ABOUT DISEASES AND SHIT, YOU KNOW.



CAN I HAVE ANOTHER?

I'M BILL ROSE.
WELCOME TO THE
RONGHI CHILDREN'S
HOME. I RUN IT,
APPARENTLY.

C'MON
IN.



COFFEE?

SURE.

BRAVE MAN. I
UNDERSTAND YOU'RE
HERE TO DO A
STORY ON MY HOME,
MR. JERUSALEM.



NO. I WANT TO DO A
PIECE ON THE KIDS I
MET TONIGHT, AND THE
OTHERS LIKE THEM.

CHILD
PROSTITUTES. AT
LEAST THREE OF WHOM
EMANATE FROM THIS
HOME. BUT I KNOW
DAMN WELL THEY'RE
NOT ALL FROM
HERE.

I WANT
TO GET YOUR
PERSPECTIVE
ON THEM.



MY PERSPECTIVE?
IT'S FLUCKED. IS WHAT MY
PERSPECTIVE IS.

BUT I WANT YOU
TO TALK ABOUT IT. IT'S THE
BEST THING YOU COULD DO
FOR ME. AND THEM.





YOU SEE, IT'S THE EASIEST THING IN THE WORLD TO GLOSS OVER, BECAUSE IT'S THE LAST THING ANY OF US WANTS TO KNOW, BUT THAT DOES NO ONE ANY GOOD.

I TRIED DOING A STORY ABOUT THIS BEFORE, BUT...IT DIDN'T GET SPIKED, EXACTLY...



I WAS AHEAD OF DEADLINES, THEY HAD OTHER COLUMNS IN HAND. IT JUST GOT SOMEHOW "LOST IN THE SHUFFLE."

LIKE YOU SAY, IT'S THE THING NO ONE WANTS TO TALK ABOUT.

WHICH IS EXACTLY WHY IT SHOULD BE TALKED ABOUT.



I CAN SAY WHAT I WANT, WHEN I WANT, NOW.

SO I HAVE TO MAKE EVEN MORE CERTAIN THAN BEFORE --I HAVE TO MAKE SURE I'M SAYING SOMETHING WORTH SAYING.

OTHERWISE I'M JUST JERKING OFF.



WILLIAM ROSE
SPECIAL DUTY

SO HOW DOES IT HAPPEN? I MEAN, THESE KIDS SELLING THEMSELVES ON THE STREETS IS JUST PART OF IT.

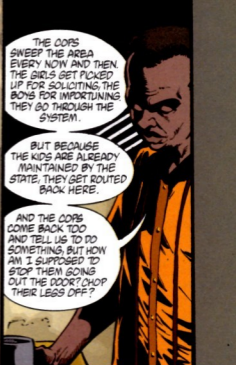


EMOTIONALLY, THEY'RE DEAD. AT BEST, DISCONNECTED. WHERE DOES THIS START?



NOT HERE.

WE'D ALL LIKE SOMEONE TO BLAME, YOU KNOW?



THE COPS SWEEP THE AREA EVERY NOW AND THEN. THE GIRLS GET PICKED UP FOR SOLICITING, THE BOYS FOR IMPORTUNING, THEY GO THROUGH THE SYSTEM.

BUT BECAUSE THE KIDS ARE ALREADY MAINTAINED BY THE STATE, THEY GET ROUTED BACK HERE.

AND THE COPS COME BACK TOO AND TELL US TO DO SOMETHING, BUT HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO STOP THEM GOING OUT THE DOOR? CHOP THEIR LEGS OFF?



THE COPS TRY PUTTING THEM IN COURT AND FINING THEM.

SO THE KIDS STAY OUT TWICE AS LONG TO SELL THEMSELVES TWICE AS LONG TO PAY OFF THE FINES.



I TRIED TALKING TO VICE, BUT YOU KNOW WHAT THE VICE COPS SAID?

THEY'RE TASKED TO HUNT PEDOPHILE RINGS THIS YEAR, NOT CHILD PROSTITUTES.



IT ENDS UP HERE, BUT WHERE DOES IT START?



MY HOME, AND ALL THE OTHERS LIKE IT, CONTAIN THE MOST DAMAGED, DEPRIVED, DEGRAVED, AND DELINQUENT CHILDREN IN THE CITY.



BUT WE'RE THE AMBULANCE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CLIFF. WE PICK THEM UP ONCE THE DAMAGE HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE TO THEM.



THESE AREN'T CHILD PROSTITUTES IN THE CLASSIC OLD SENSE, DOING IT FOR FOOD, MONEY AND SHELTER, TO LIVE.


LOOK AT HER.

THERESE. WE JUST GOT HER BACK. SHE'S A CRACK ADDICT. CHILD PROSTITUTE. RAPE VICTIM. FIVE-TIME ASSAULT VICTIM. ATTEMPTED MURDER VICTIM.

SHE'LL BE ON THE K-ROAD TOMORROW NIGHT.

US AND THE COPS AND THE CHURCHES AND THE STATE ARE TRIPPING OVER EACH OTHER TO GIVE THEM EVERYTHING THEY NEED.

THESE KIDS MAKE HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS A WEEK. THEY SPEND IT ON LUXURIES. SOME OF THEM MAINTAIN APARTMENTS.



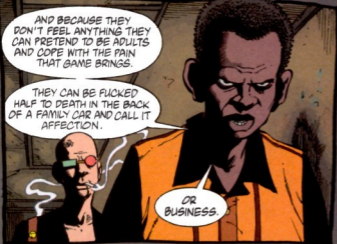
I CAUGHT TWO KIDS WORKING HER OVER, LAST YEAR. I MEAN, REALLY GOING FOR IT, KICKING THE SHIT OUT OF HER.

SHE WAS ON THE FLOOR, FBTAI COMPLETELY SERENE. TEARS STREAMING DOWN HER FACE, BUT COMPLETELY EXPRESSIONLESS.



THESE KIDS DON'T FEEL ANYTHING.

THEY'VE LEARNED NOT TO FEEL ANYTHING.



AND BECAUSE THEY DON'T FEEL ANYTHING THEY CAN PRETEND TO BE ADULTS AND COPE WITH THE PAIN THAT GAME BRINGS.

THEY CAN BE FUCKED HALF TO DEATH IN THE BACK OF A FAMILY CAR AND CALL IT AFFECTION.

OR BUSINESS.

DEAL WITH EVERYTHING IN TERMS OF MONEY AND POWER, BECAUSE THEY COME FROM LIVES WITHOUT MONEY WHERE THEY WERE POWERLESS.



AND HURT.



EVERYONE'S LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO BLAME. SOCIETY. CULTURE. HOLLYWOOD. PREDATORS.

LOOKING EVERYWHERE BUT THE RIGHT PLACE.



CHILDREN ARE VERY SIMPLE, MR. JERUSALEM VERY EASY DEVICES TO BREAK, OR ASSEMBLE WRONGS.

YOU WANT TO KNOW WHO DID THIS TO THESE KIDS?

ONLY THEIR PARENTS.

PLUCK!



THAT'S THE THING NO ONE WANTS TO HEAR.

EVERY TIME YOU STOP THINKING ABOUT HOW YOU'RE TREATING YOUR KID, YOU MAKE ONE OF THESE.

IT REALLY IS AS SIMPLE AS THAT.



IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH POVERTY OR THE FAILURE OF SOCIETY OR ANY OF THAT.

IT'S GOT EVERYTHING TO DO WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAKING A HUMAN.



WHY ARE YOUR KIDS SELLING THEMSELVES ON THE STREETS?

BECAUSE YOU COMPLETELY FUCKED UP THE JOB OF RAISING THEM.



THAT'S WHAT NO ONE WANTS TO HEAR. THAT WE CAN'T BLAME ANYTHING OUTSIDE OUR HOUSES.

AND EVERY TIME WE SAY AND DO OTHERWISE, WE MAKE MORE KIDS LIKE THAT...

OVER THERE.



BUSINESS?

