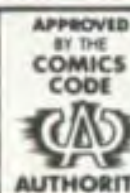




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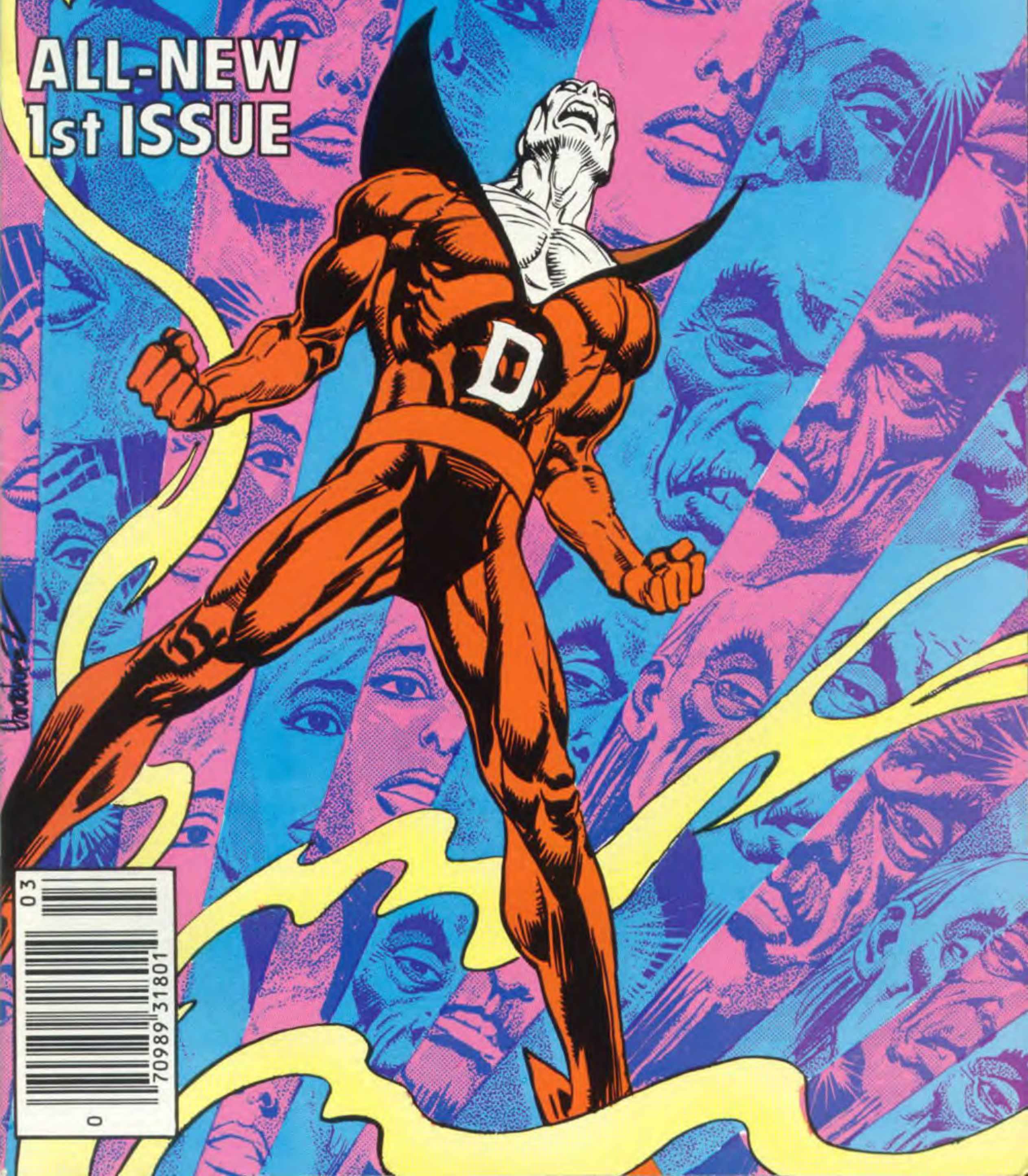
ANDREW HELFER & JOSÉ LUIS GARCIA LOPEZ

75¢
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MAR. 86



DEADMAN™

ALL-NEW
1st ISSUE





WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?!

BOSTON--
GET YOUR TAIL
BACK IN BED!



SORRY, BATS, BUT I'VE
BEEN COOPED UP IN THIS
SICKROOM WAY TOO LONG!

AND ONCE I FIND MY
CLOTHES, I'LL BE
QUITTING PARADISE!

DON'T WASTE
YOUR BREATH, MA'AM--
HE'S THE STUBBORNEST
MAN I'VE EVER MET!

BATMAN!
WHAT'S
HAPPEN--
I CAME
AS SOON
AS I--
BOSTON!

BUT, MR. BRAND,
YOU DO NEED
YOUR REST...



NOT NOW,
BROTHER--
I'M BUSY.

LAST PLACE TO LOOK IS
THIS WARDROBE, BUT--
UGH-- ITS DOORS'RE
LOCKED
TIGHT!

BOSTON, ARE
YOU CRAZY, OR
JUST PLAIN
STUPID?!



YOU ALMOST DIED AFTER BEING
POISONED BY THE SENSEI'S LEAGUE
OF ASSASSINING! NOW YOU--

JUST BUG OFF,
CLEVE-- I'VE
GOT THINGS
ON MY MIND!

LIKE GETTING
THAT DOOR
OPEN WITHOUT
A KEY! I-- UHMM...



UH, BATMAN, OLD PAL... THIS
LOCK SEEMS TO BE STUCK...
UH... YOU THINK WITH YOUR
UTILITY BELT YOU COULD--?

I DON'T THINK
SO, BOSTON. LISTEN
TO YOUR BROTHER.
HE'S ONLY TRYING TO--



OPEN IT!!

OH,
DEAR!



RIGHT. WELL, I JUST
WANT YOU TO KNOW
THAT I'M DOING THIS
UNDER PROTEST...

MERE
SECONDS
TICK BY,
AND THEN...



THERE YOU GO,
BOSTON--
TAKE IT!

BUT--
TAKE IT
EASY!!

A MOMENT LATER, THE DOORS OF THE CLAPBOARD COTTAGE SPRING OPEN, AND THE THREE EMERGE.

IN A WORLD WHERE ALL MEN MUST FIND THEIR OWN SEPARATE PEACE, THIS SECRET PLACE IS THE EXCEPTION--A LAND WHERE ALL MEN LIVE UNDER THE SAME KIND OF PEACE--

AN ALL-PERVADING CALM, AS WARM AND PURE AS THE AIR WAVING OVER THE MOUNTAINS THAT PROTECT THIS REFUGE FROM THE EYES OF THE WORLD.

FOR THE MASKED CRIME-FIGHTER WHO KNOWS ONLY THE FEAR AND HATE OF THE URBAN JUNGLE, AND FOR THE AERIALIST WHO SEES DEATH WAITING PATIENTLY IN THE GRANDSTANDS DURING HIS EVERY PERFORMANCE, THE CALM IS ALMOST INTOXICATING.

BOSTON, HEAR ME OUT! WE BOTH KNOW THAT YOU WERE MURDERED MONTHS AGO--BUT HERE IN NANDA PARBAT, YOU'RE ALIVE AND ALMOST WELL!

NOW, IF YOU'RE DEAD, BUT STILL LIVING, THEN IT STANDS TO REASON--

--THIS MUST BE HEAVEN--OR AS CLOSE TO IT AS YOU'LL EVER GET!

BUT ALL YOU CAN THINK ABOUT IS GETTING BACK TO THE REAL WORLD! YOU GOTTA HAVE A REASON--BESIDES TEMPORARY INSANITY!

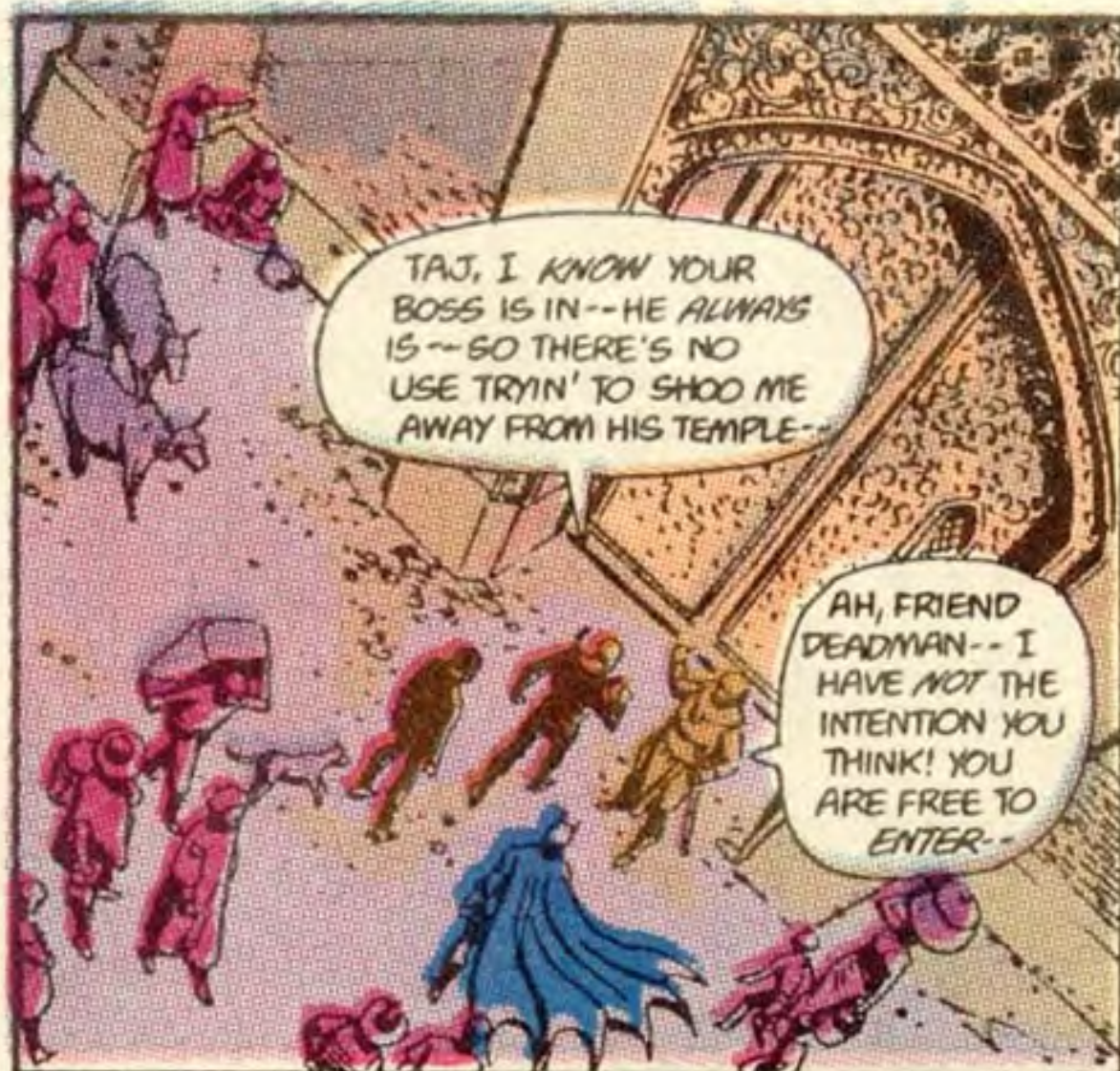
AND FOR THE THIRD MEMBER OF THEIR PARTY--THE WANDERING SPIRIT RETURNED TO FLESH AND BLOOD BY THE GODHEAD OF THIS HIDDEN PARADISE--WELL, HE ISN'T IMPRESSED.

DO YOURSELF A FAVOR AND START PACKING, CLEVE.

I'VE GOTTA TALK TO SOMEBODY FOR A SEC--THEN WE'RE MOVING OUT!

RETURN...
TO FOREVER!

ANDREW HELFER . JOSÉ LUIS GARCIA LOPEZ
WRITER ARTIST
JOHN COSTANZA . TOM ZILKO . JANICE RACE
LETTERER COLORIST EDITOR



TAJ, I KNOW YOUR BOSS IS IN-- HE ALWAYS IS-- SO THERE'S NO USE TRYIN' TO SHOO ME AWAY FROM HIS TEMPLE--

AH, FRIEND DEADMAN-- I HAVE NOT THE INTENTION YOU THINK! YOU ARE FREE TO ENTER--



--MOST SACRED RAMA KUSHNA HAS ANTICIPATED YOUR ARRIVAL.

YEAH-- I FIGURED AS MUCH.

THAT'S THE PROBLEM IN DEALIN' WITH GODS-- THERE'S NO SURPRISIN' 'EM!



RAMA?

RAMA!

THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE, BUDDY! YOUR BEST BOY IS TAKIN' OFF ON THE NEXT FLIGHT OUT--

-- DON'T YOU WANT TO SEE ME OFF?



AH, DEADMAN.. YOUR INSOLENCE IS ALMOST... REFRESHING. A SHAME THAT IT IS NOT BOLSTERED BY THE LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE.

WHA--?!

THERE YOU ARE-- JUST AS POMPOUS AS EVER!

WHAT'S THE MATTER, RAMA-- YOU TOO PROUD TO SAY THANK YOU? I SPENT THREE DAYS RECOVERING FROM THE SENSEI'S POISON-- AND YOU DIDN'T EVEN PAY A SICK CALL?



SILENCE, DEADMAN. I NEED NOT JUSTIFY MY ACTIONS TO YOU--



-- GAVE TO SAY THAT YOUR BATTLE WITH THE SENSEI WAS BUT A SHADOW OF THE GREATER CONFLICT YET TO COME.

THE SENSEI HAS MARSHALLED TO HIS SIDE BOTH THE FORCES OF MYSTICISM AND TECHNOLOGY-- AND IF HE RETURNS, I FEAR THAT I ALONE MAY NOT OVERCOME THE COMBINATION.

COME OFF IT, RAMA!



THAT OLD MAN'S PROBABLY DEADDER THAN A FORSKLE BY NOW-- BATMAN AND CLEVE LEFT HIM WANDERING IN THE SNOW AFTER THEY SNATCHED THE ANTIDOTE TO MY POISON!

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GETTING AT, RAMA-- AND BEFORE YOU GO ANY FURTHER, I'M TELLING YOU NOW--



--I'M LEAVING!



WAIT, DEADMAN--
TURN AND FACE ME!
WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT--

THAT'S RIGHT,
RAMA--WE
DO.



"TO STRIVE TO
MAINTAIN A
BALANCE OF
GOOD OVER
EVIL"--IS HOW
YOU PUT IT!
AND I'LL
ABIDE BY
THAT--

--BUT IN
MY OWN
WAY!

I AGREED TO REMAIN
A GHOST; GOD ONLY
KNOWS WHY!

BUT BEFORE I BECOME YOUR SOLDIER
PERMANENTLY, I'VE GOT TO TAKE CARE OF
SOME LOOSE ENDS IN
MY PAST!

I'VE TASTED LIFE AGAIN,
HERE IN NANDA PARBAT--BUT
IT'S MEANINGLESS! I'VE GOT
TO GET BACK HOME--

--IF ONLY TO TOUCH
THE PEOPLE I LOVE
ONE LAST TIME!



DEADMAN, ONLY
HERE IN NANDA PARBAT
DOES YOUR FORM TAKE
ON SUBSTANCE.
ELSEWHERE--

I KNOW, I KNOW.
BUT I HAVE MY BROTHER
CLEVELAND. HE'LL HELP
ME OUT.

HEED ME, DEADMAN.
NO GOOD WILL COME OF
THIS. EVIL MASQUERADES
AS INNOCENCE IN THE
WORLD--I CANNOT LET
YOU LEAVE--

YOU'RE A LOT OF THINGS TO
A LOT OF PEOPLE, RAMA-- BUT
I KNOW YOU'RE NOT A LIAR.
YOU'LL LET ME GO. YOU HAVE
TO. YOU GAVE YOUR WORD.

GOOD-BYE,
FOR NOW. WE'LL
MEET AGAIN.

WE MUST,
DEADMAN. OUR
FUTURES WILL
DEPEND ON IT.



--YOU GET TO
BORROW THE
BODIES OF THE
MOST INTERESTING
DUDESSSSSS--

"VISIONS OF WHITE--
PURE, CONTEMPTIBLE
WHITE--BROKEN BY THE
SHADOW OF MACHINES
THAT FLY. I KNOW
THEM WELL.

"THE DARKNESS
SOOTHES. IT REAWAKENS
THE MIND, ELEVATES THE
CONSCIOUSNESS, STIRS
THE FROZEN BONES
AND MUSCLES.

"I LIVE.

"HOW LONG HAS
THIS PITIFUL BODY
ENDURED THE
ELEMENTS? IT
MATTERS NOT.

"THE MIND IS
STRONG. THE MIND
IS ALL. IT CONTROLS
THE BODY. IT HEALS
AND DESTROYS.

"NOW...
IT HEALS.

"SOON...
IT DESTROYS.

"SOON."



AN ETERNITY DISTANT,
AND SIX HOURS LATER,
CLEVELAND BRAND
SILENTLY PARACHUTES
TO THE GROUND, JUST
OUTSIDE THE CURRENT
SITE OF HILL'S CIRCUS...

LORD, I CAN'T
BELIEVE IT! ONE MINUTE,
BATMAN AND ME ARE
TALKING ABOUT THE
GOOD OLD DAYS WE
NEVER SHARED--

--THE NEXT, HE'S SHAKING
COBWEBS OUT OF HIS
HEAD AND CURSING BOSTON
LIKE HE WAS SITTING RIGHT
NEXT TO US!



EITHER BATMAN IS A
BONA FIDE
SCHIZOPHRENIC--
OR BOSTON REALLY
WAS INSIDE HIS
BODY! I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
TO BELIEVE!



--BUT,
THEN
AGAIN--

--EH?
THAT
SOUND--!



HOLEE--!
BURGLARS! COMING
OUT OF THE
PAYROLL OFFICE--
AND PACKING
GUNS!



I'M NO HERO!
THAT WAS ALWAYS
BOSTON'S SPECIALTY!

BUT I'VE
GOTTA DO
SOMETHING,
SO HERE
GOES--!



URK!



Some enchanted
evening...!

WHAT
TH--?

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM



LUKE--YOU'RE
GONNA WAKE
EVERYBODY UP!
YOU GONE CRAZY
OR WHAT?!

CRAZY?
NAH--



--I'M
JUST HAVIN'
SOME
FUN!!





LATER...

WHEW! WHAT A NIGHT! I HAD TO TELL THE POLICE I TOOK OUT BOTH THOSE GUYS SINGLE-HANDED--OR ELSE THEY'D THINK I WAS NUTS!



BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE POSSIBILITY THAT MAKES SENSE NOW! BOSTON IS DEAD--BUT HIS SPIRIT'S OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, WATCHIN' OVER ME LIKE A GUARDIAN ANGEL--

--AND HE'S GOT THE POWER TO JUST CRAWL INSIDE PEOPLE AND TAKE OVER THEIR BODIES!



OKAY, BOSTON--YOU'VE HAD YOUR FUN--IT'S JUST THE TWO OF US NOW! YOU OWE ME AN EXPLANATION--AND NOW I'M READY FOR IT!

LET'S GO, BROTHER...



I... HAVEN'T... GOT...



...ALL...



...NIGHT--?

WHAT TH--? IT'S MORNING ALREADY?



AND MY HAND-- IT'S ALL CRAMPED UP-- LIKE I JUST SPENT THE LAST COUPLE OF HOURS WRITING--



--A LETTER?

THE HANDWRITING-- IT'S BOSTON'S! HOW DID HE--?

In case you still haven't figured it out, Cleve, you've just spent the last few hours under the influence of a Deadman... and if you read the following carefully, you might begin to understand what I've been up to for these last few months...

"I was the BEST,
Cleve--the greatest Aerialist
the world had ever known!
I was BORN to fly and I
did it EVERY night under
the Big top tent!"

"The RUBES
are it up! They
were like putty
in my hands,
Cleve--I could
do NO WRONG--
until the
moment EVERY-
THING went
wrong!"

"When
the bullet
tore through
me, I hardly
even felt it! All I
knew was I'd lost
CONTROL--and
was heading
down fast!"

"But when
I hit the
ground, I was
okay! I tried
to tell the
others, but
they weren't
LISTENING
to me!"

"It wasn't till
I saw myself
lying there that
the truth
seeped in!"

"I was dead--but still
alive! Conscious--but only
as a spirit! I screamed
to the heavens--and a
voice from a
TREE answered
me!"

"It was RAMA
KUSHNA, the
Balancer of Good
over Evil. Rama
said that I was
getting a chance
to find the guy
who KILLED me."



"--a guy, I discovered while eaves-
dropping at my own funeral,
who had a HOOK in place of one of
his hands.

"I know it sounds
crazy, Cleve, but at
that moment I
swore I'd get him.

"It took a while,
but I finally found
the hook in the
streets of Hong Kong--

"--only to have an
oriental man named
Sensei kill him
before I could do
the job MYSELF!

"Sensei thought
that hook had
FAILED to kill me,
'cause you kept up the
Deadman act after I'd died--
and the penalty for
failure in the Society
of Assassins is DEATH!

"Technically,
my mission was
OVER, but I wasn't
ready to go just yet. So
I made a deal with Rama
to continue
rooting out
evil--and
Rama
accepted.

"I've been facing a lot of
HARD TRUTHS lately--not the
least of which is that I'm
never going to LIVE again. I
want a WEEK of your life,
Cleve--to feel the pulse
one last time. Love, Boston."

WELL, BROTHER, IT'S
NICE OF YOU TO ASK,
SINCE I KNOW YOU
DON'T HAVE TO!

WHAT THE HECK--
WHY NOT? JUST TRY
NOT TO GET ME IN
ANY TROUBLE, OKAY?

BUT YAWN! I WON'T
BE ANY GOOD TO YOU IN
THIS CONDITION! FEEL LIKE
I'VE BEEN UP ALL NIGHT--
I GOTTA GET SOME
SLEEP!

REST WELL, CLEVE--
WE'VE GOT A LONG
WEEK AHEAD OF US!



AND SO, THAT EVENING,
IT IS IN BODY ONLY
THAT CLEVELAND BRAND
LEAVES HIS CAMPER...
IN SPIRIT, IT IS
BOSTON!

NOW, THIS
IS LIVING THE
WAY I
REMEMBER
IT--CIRCUS
LIVING!



IT SURE AIN'T PARADISE--
BUT IT DEFINITELY IS
REAL!

THIS IS
THE LIFE!



HA!

COMING
FROM ME, THAT
SOUNDS SO
STRANGE IT'S
KINDA FUNNY!



BUT IT FEELS SO GOOD I ALMOST
PITY THE FOLKS OF NANDA PARBAT
IN THEIR STERILIZED SHANGRI-LA--
EH?

THUMP
THUMP



TINY--
THE CIRCUS
STRONGMAN!

WHILE I LIVED,
I WAS PRETTY HARD ON
THAT BIG DUMB LUG--
AND AFTER I DIED, I
USED HIS BODY LIKE IT
WAS A PUNCHING
BAG!

MAYBE
THERE'S SOME
WAY I CAN
EXPLAIN--

HEY, TINY!



HUH?!

MR.
BOSTON!?



NOT EXACTLY,
TINY--

OH--IT'S
YOU, MR.
CLEVE--SORRY!



IT'S JUS' THAT I WAS
THINKIN' 'BOUT MR. BOSTON
WHEN YOU CAME ROUND
WEARIN' HIS OLD
COSTUME!



GUESS I MISS
HIM--WE ALL DO!
THINGS'RE JUS'
NOT THE SAME
SINCE HE...WENT
AWAY...

LET'S SIT
DOWN, TINY...WE
SHOULD TALK.



TINY, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF I TOLD YOU THAT BOSTON WAS STILL ALIVE?

STILL ALIVE--!? HECK, MR. CLEVE --I'D SAY YOU WERE JUS' PLAIN LOONEY!



I SAW IT HAPPEN! I SAW HIM FALL! I--I DON'T THINK I'LL... EVER FORGET IT...



I'M NOT SAYING HE DIDN'T FALL, TINY! BUT WHAT IF HIS... UH... SOUL--HIS SPIRIT-- WAS STILL AROUND, KINDA LIKE IT WAS FLOATING IN THE AIR--LIKE IT WAS WATCHING US!

HHMM... WELL, I--

--YEAH! I DO BELIEVE IT! IT'S THE SAME LIKE MY DADDY TOL' ME WHEN MAMMA DIED!

COULD YOU BELIEVE SOMETHING LIKE THAT?



SHE'S LOOKIN' OVER ME RIGHT NOW-- AND I BET'CHA MR. BOSTON'S RIGHT THERE NEXT TO HER!

YOU BELIEVE THAT, DON'T YOU, MR. CLEVE?



YEAH, TINY... I GUESS I DO...



WELL-- I BETTER GET BACK TO WORK NOW! BUSY DAY TOMORROW!



MAN, LIFE IS FUNNY! I THOUGHT I HAD TINY PEGGED--THAT HE'D NEVER SEE MY POINT--

-TURNS OUT HE UNDERSTANDS MORE THAN I THOUGHT!



NOW I'VE GOT TO HELP LORNA UNDERSTAND...

... BUT THIS TIME I WON'T LET WORDS GET IN THE WAY

NOK NOK



CLEVE!



NO...



THE NEXT DAY...

NEVER THOUGHT
DRIVING COULD BE
MORE FUN THAN
FLYING--



--BUT THIS IS ONE
PLACE I DON'T
THINK I COULD BEAR
TO VISIT AS A
GHOST!



THERE
IT IS--



--RIGHT
WHERE I
LEFT IT!



I WONDER
HOW MANY
PEOPLE GET TO
SEE THEIR OWN
GRAVES--FROM
THE TOP DOWN!
GOTTA TRY NOT
TO THINK ABOUT
WHAT'S INSIDE
THAT--

RAMA KUSHNA
PROTECT YOU,
BOSTON BRAND!



HOLY
SPIT!!

VASHNU!! WHAT
THE HELL ARE YOU
DOING HERE? AND
YOU CALLED ME
BOSTON! YOU
KNOW--BUT HOW?



THEN AGAIN--
FORGET THAT! I
SHOULD'VE EXPECTED
IT, YOU OLD FAKIR!
YOU'VE ALWAYS DOGGED
MY TRAIL. IT STANDS TO
REASON YOU'D KNOW
WHO I AM!



THIS DISCIPLE OF RAMA
KNOWS MUCH ABOUT YOU,
BOSTON-- YOU
MUST RETURN
TO NANDA
PARBAT, FOR
YOU WILL SOON
BE NEEDED
THERE!

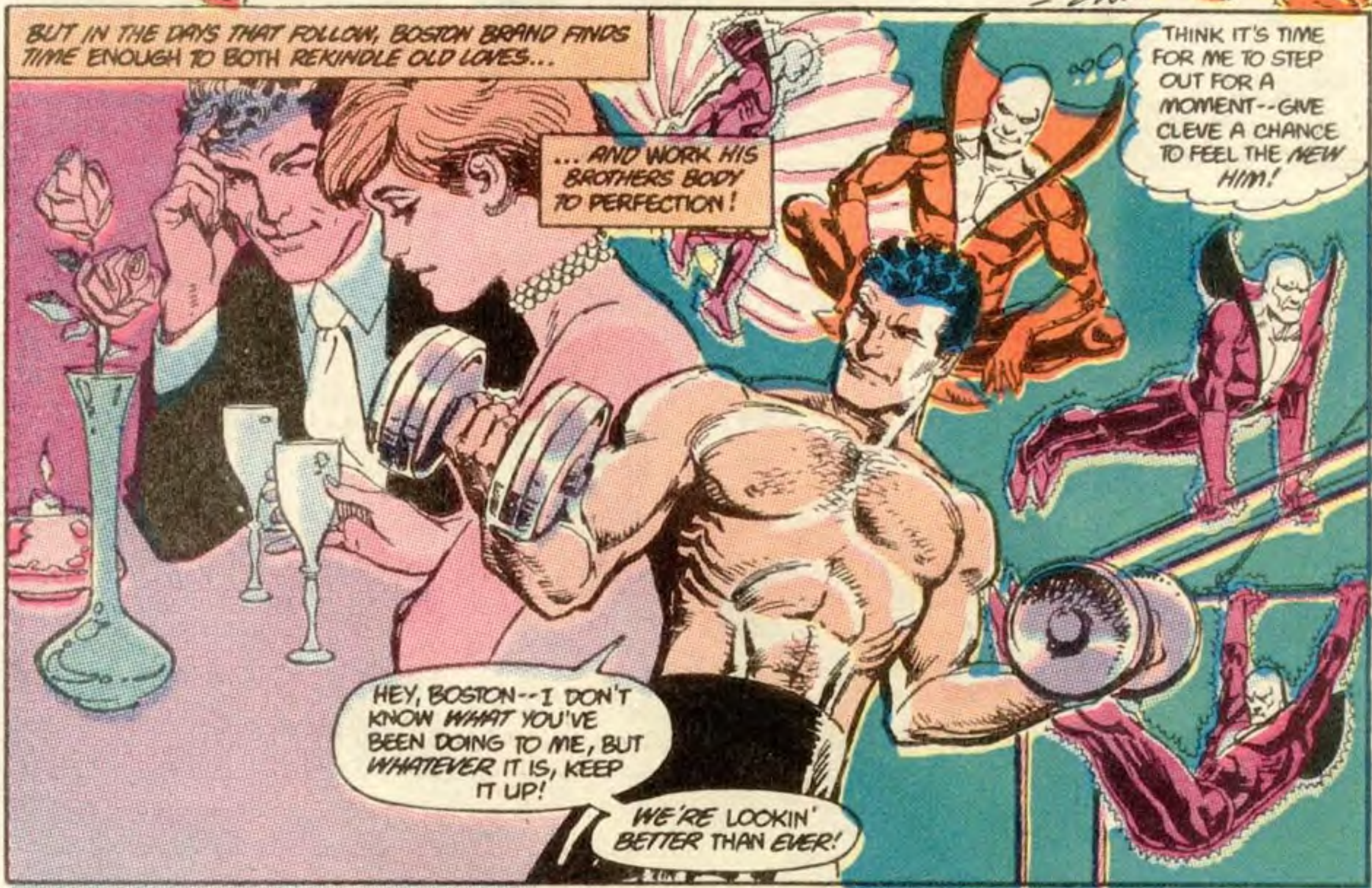
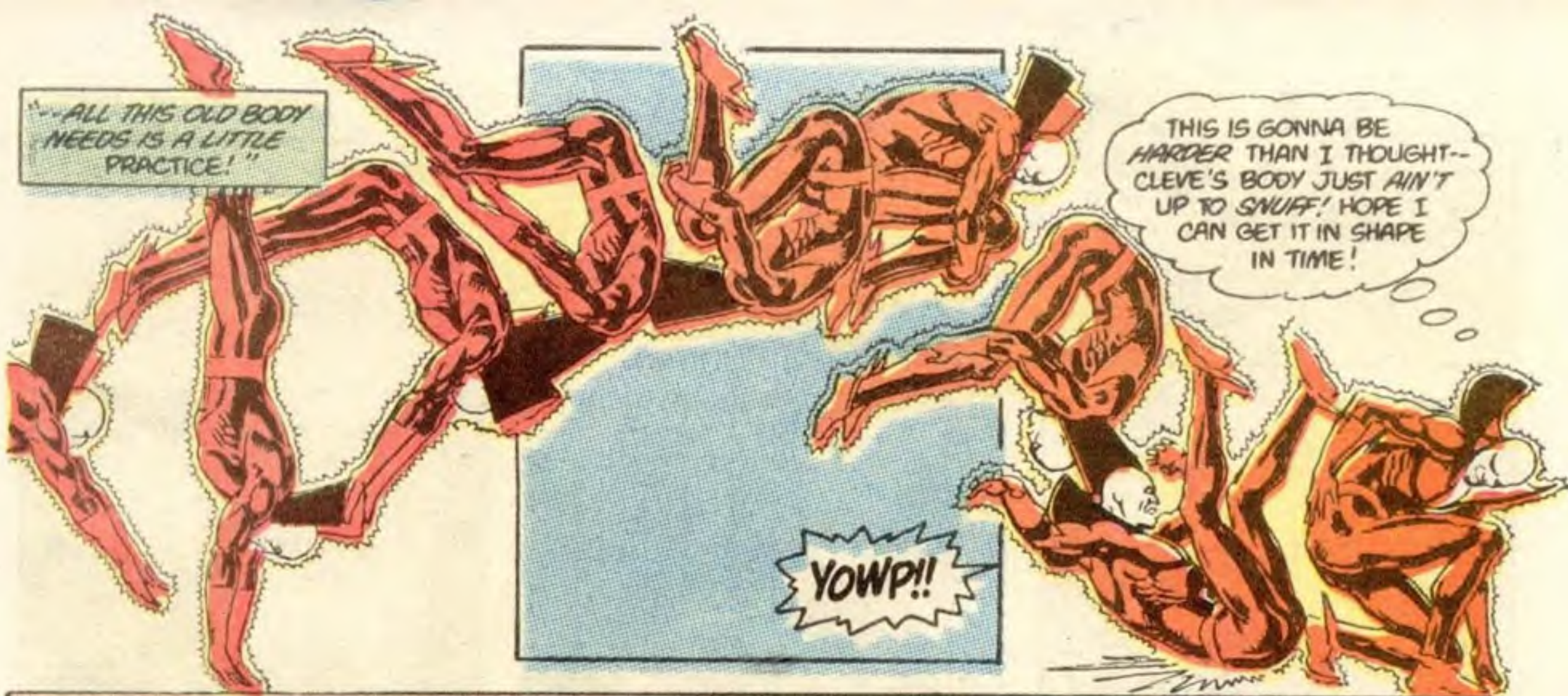
I'VE HEARD
THAT ONE
BEFORE, VASH--
NOW THINK OF
SOMETHING
ORIGINAL!



I CAN
SAY NO
MORE!

THERE IS
DANGER HERE,
BOSTON-- A
DANGER GREATER
THEN EVEN
DEATH ITSELF!

DON'T
WORRY ABOUT
ME, VASHNU.
I CAN TAKE
CARE OF
MYSELF--







NOOOOOO



OH MY GOD



NOT AGAIN!



NOT AGAIN!!



B-BOSTON!
THANK GOD
IT'S YOU!

WHERE
THE HELL
ARE WE?!!

THIS ISN'T LIKE IT WAS BEFORE!
LAST I-TIME YOU TOOK OVER I
JUST S-SORTA BLACKED OUT--
BUT THIS EMPTINESS--IT'S
LIKE A NIGHTMARE!

I--I DON'T
THINK
I-I'M
CUT OUT
FOR TH-
THIS,
BROTHER--
YOU GOTTA
T-TAKE ME
BACK!

I
CAN'T...

YOU CAN'T? YOU SENT
ME HERE--AND YOU
DAMN WELL
BETTER GET
ME OUT!!

CLEVE--
LISTEN TO ME!
I WAS ON THE
TRAPEZE--
HEARD A GUN-
SHOT--FELT
THE PAIN--
NOW WE'RE
HERE! THAT
CAN ONLY
MEAN...

... WE'RE BOTH
DEAD NOW?

I-I'M
SORRY,
CLEVE...

SORRY? I LEND
YOU MY BODY, YOU
KILL IT-- AND YOU
SAY YOU'RE SORRY?!!

THAT'S JUST
NOT GOOD
ENOUGH!!

THIS IS YOUR
FAULT, BOSTON
-- ALL YOUR
FAULT!

YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T
EVEN HAVE THE DECENCY
TO USE THE NET, RIGHT?

YOU DAMN EGO
MANIAC! I'M
GONNA--

WHAT TH-- SOME
KINDA SUCTION--
PULLING ME BACK!
I--





'FRAID NOT, BROTHER. I DON'T THINK THINGS WILL EVER BE OKAY AGAIN-- FOR EITHER OF US!

HEY! YOU'RE NOT GONNA--!



YES.

I'M GOING IN.

BUT DON'T WORRY, CLEVE. I'M BETTING YOU'LL TAKE MY PLACE AS RAMA'S PET GHOST-BOY--



--AND AS FOR ME--? WELL, I'LL TRY AND SEND YOU A POST-CARD, LET YOU KNOW HOW IT ALL TURNED OUT.

BOSTON, WAIT! YOU CAN'T-- I DIDN'T--!



GO NO FURTHER, DEADMAN! YOU MUST NOT ENTER HERE!

AT THE CORE OF THE VORTEX RESTS THE JUDGMENT FOR THE UNTOUCHED SOUL--

--A JUDGMENT THAT, FOR YOUR BROTHER, WOULD BE ONE FOR ETERNAL PEACE!

BUT YOUR SOUL IS NO LONGER PURE-- IT HAS ALREADY BEEN TOUCHED --BEEN ALTERED BY MY HAND!



WHAT'RE YOU SAYING, RAMA? THAT MY SOUL'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH?

YOU MADE ME WHAT I AM! YOU CLEAR ME WITH THE GUYS UPSTAIRS!



HEED ME, DEADMAN! IF YOU ATTEMPT TO PASS THROUGH THE EPICENTER, YOUR SOUL WILL BE FOUND WANTING! IT WILL BE REJECTED AND THRUST BACK ONTO THE PHYSICAL PLANE!



YOUR VESSEL HAS BEEN CORRUPTED, AND THOUGH YOU WILL RETURN, THE DOORWAY TO PERCEPTION WILL FOREVER BE LOCKED! YOU WILL BE--



I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, RAMA--



"--AND FRANKLY, I DON'T
MUCH CARE ANYMORE."



WHATEVER'S
WAITING FOR
ME ON THE
OTHER SIDE--



"--IT'LL BE EASIER TO DEAL
WITH THAT THAN WITH THE
GUILT."



BUT WHAT
ABOUT ME,
BOSTON?

WHAT
ABOUT MY
GUILT?



"I USED TO THINK THERE
WAS NOTHING WORSE THAN
DEATH..."



... BUT
AFTER
LISTENING
TO YOUR
FRIEND
RAMA, I'M
SURE
THERE
IS!!



"DON'T DO IT, BOSTON--
NOT FOR ME!"



KINDA LATE
FOR THAT,
BROTHER--
IT'S JUST
AHEAD...



"... BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM
ALL THAT BAD."



GETTING REAL
CLOSE NOW...
STARTING TO
FEEL A LITTLE
WEIRD...

BUT IT'S OKAY.
REMEMBER WHAT
GOOD OLD UNCLE
BERT ALWAYS USED
TO SAY--



"I'M A SURVIVOR..."



NO!!

IN THE BACK OF HIS MIND, IN THE PERIPHERY OF WHAT REMAINS OF THE THING CALLED CONSCIOUSNESS, THE MAN WHO WAS BOSTON BRAND HEARS HIS BROTHER'S FINAL, PLAINTIVE CRY...

... AND THEN, ON THIS QUIET HILLSIDE SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDWEST, THE MAN WHO WAS BOSTON BRAND HEARS NOTHING AT ALL.

**"NEXT:
THIS
MORTAL
COIL!"**

Garcia



L-2249

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**ATTENTION, READERS:
THIS IS THE SINGLE MOST
IMPORTANT LETTER COLUMN
YOU WILL READ ALL YEAR!**

That's right, folks—I personally guarantee it! Why? Because, in the next few paragraphs, I will singlehandedly blow the lid off the comic book industry—a business so rife with corruption, blackmail, and (AND!) bribery that it makes Watergate pale in comparison! That's right! I've been there and back—and now it's time for comic fans everywhere to finally know the truth:

I only got this job 'cause I promised Janice Race I'd write the letter columns.

That's right, fellow readers—I have been FORCED to write this letter column. Let me explain a sec here, so's you don't get the wrong idea about the peculiar love-hate relationship most of us comic book editors have with letter columns. Fact is, we USUALLY love doing them. We get to go through these stacks of mail, sorting out the wheat from the chaff, culling the best (read: provocative, intelligent, TYPED) to print and answer. Thing is, the mail doesn't come till the readers read the book. So, while your average letter column is a rewarding experience in feedback maintenance, the first four letter columns of any comic are composed of either the editor, writer, or artist blathering off at the typewriter, writing about their pasts (sordid or otherwise), their loves, hates, bathroom habits—anything to fill the page. In this way, the reader gets a better sense of the crew behind the scenes. Suffice to say, the reason this is such a difficult task to perform is that you gotta stretch the whole thing over FOUR (count 'em) issues. Besides that, comic book people are SUCH a MODEST lot—tooting our own horns just ain't in our nature. (Well ... then again...) But enough digression. Back to our exposé.

I remember it like it was yesterday. Janice walked into my office, my DEADMAN proposal clenched tightly in her left hand and a stack of similar (but different) proposals for a DEADMAN mini-series in her right. Her eyes seemed to glower with a ferocity I'd never quite noticed before (but then again, I'd never worked for her before!) as she leaned over my desk and dropped the pile of proposals into my out box.

"Theirs were all good," she growled. "But THEY refused to write the letter columns. THEY couldn't be bought. Can YOU?"

I didn't know what to say. It had come down to this. I really WANTED to write DEADMAN (see below for some reasons why), but was I prepared to pay the price? (Obviously, yes, but keep reading anyway!) I wanted to avoid writing about myself at all costs—but there had to be a compromise in there somewhere. Could I find it?

It came to me in a flash. I suddenly remembered Nick Cuti's text pages for his SPANNER'S GALAXY mini-series. They were actually fiction text features, which, taken together, made a nice set of stories. I smiled at Janice. "How'd you like a mystery STORY featuring MAX LOOMIS?" (Max is a character we'll be introducing next issue; for now, let's just say he's a detective.) Janice rubbed her chin a second, smiled, and agreed.

Now, I have to admit, my personal tastes run a little towards the extreme. I'm a hardboiled mystery fan, and, even there, I've got a special affection for the more "vulgar" writers in the genre. (FYI, some of the best are David Goodis, Horace McCoy, and Jim Thompson—the best sleaze fiction ever written.) So I went home, hit the keys of my Macintosh personal computer (yes, I have one too, but I can't draw pretty pictures on it, sorry), and after a couple of hours, I came out with the first installment of a story. It began like this:

"You might say that the first cut was the deepest; it damn near lopped his head off. The rest seemed almost superfluous, a halfhearted barrage of gashes and punctures that, even taken together, might have only left him a vegetable. No, the first one did the trick all by itself. Alone, it sent Dr. Dwight Fletcher straight to hell."

It got worse after that. Janice wondered aloud if any comic had ever been rejected by the Comics Code because of a text page—and quickly added that she wasn't going to be the first editor to find out. So it was back to the drawing board for me and—I must now admit—I succumbed. Sorry, gang ... I took the easy (and safe) way out. I wrote about ... me. (gulp)

That being said, we can get down to the nutz and boltz of this column. I really wouldn't be doing this, y'understand, but there's this lady standing here with a gun pointing at my head, and she's got an itchy trigger finger. She also has a production manager named Rozakis

screaming bloody murder for a late letter column and...

You know the rest. So, for better or worse, I'm gonna call the remainder of this column...

My Life with a Deadman

Years ago, when I was just a kid (just?), I remember picking up the first few issues of *Deadman* as he appeared in a magazine called STRANGE ADVENTURES. I remember thinking the idea—that a guy could go around and hop into the bodies of people, take over their lives for a while, and just move on when he got tired of it—was "neat." Still do, as a matter of fact. It was the perfect fantasy trip. I mean, at the time it seemed to me that ANYONE else's life just HAD to be more interesting than my own. To step into the other guy's shoes for a while was the fantasy of a lifetime. So while the other kids were dreaming about flying over Metropolis, swooping into the dark alleyways of Gotham City, or running around Central City at the speed of light, I was thinking about being ... a ghost.

Of course, I would've done things a bit ... er ... DIFFERENTLY than old Boston Brand. Not having the fundamental instincts (or, for that matter, the moral qualities) of your basic super-hero, I fantasized about taking over the body of the local football hero or class stud, and reaping the requisite rewards. Ultimately, I decided that I would have made a lousy Deadman—but I would've had a heck of a lot more fun at it...

I guess you get the picture, though. I really loved the STRANGE ADVENTURES run of *Deadman*—and was heartbroken when it came to an end. Seemed to me at the time, though, that it never actually did end—that we left poor Boston right in the MIDDLE of his biggest adventure yet—an adventure that saw print, oddly enough, as a Batman team-up in BRAVE AND THE BOLD. Years later I learned from Dick Giordano that Deadman's story in STRANGE ADVENTURES had been cancelled in midstream, and the BRAVE AND THE BOLD story had been quickly put together to give the readers some kind of a conclusion to the saga of Deadman's arrival at Nanda Parbat. According to Dick, it wasn't the WHOLE story, but a condensed (some would say patchy) version, since faltering sales had already determined that it would be Dick's LAST opportunity to do a full-length Deadman story. Writer/artist Neal Adams was just about ready to break new ground with the character—

only to be forced to tie up all his loose ends in a tiny twenty-page package.

Thereafter, I scoured the newsstands looking for more of Deadman, and, on occasion, I found it. First, in a series of marvelously produced stand-alone stories in the pages of ADVENTURE COMICS. All of them were great—and, in fact, had advanced the Deadman character immeasurably since its debut years before.

Still, I had this uneasy feeling that, somehow, the original story line had never been resolved. There was some story that had never been written in the Deadman legend that SHOULD have been written, some logical conclusion that, due to a mixture of poor sales and fate, had never been realized. When, years later, I came to work at DC Comics, first as a Special Projects editor under Joe Orlando, and now as a comic book editor for Dick Giordano (I edit GREEN LANTERN, JLA, and a lot of other goodies), I'd longed to ask Neal Adams about that missing piece to the Deadman puzzle. I'm afraid I never got the chance, but, through a series of strange circumstances, got something even better—the opportunity to actually write the conclusion to my long-imagined story line.

It happened like this: Dick Giordano noted the success of our reprints of the original Deadman saga, and decided that, once and for all, it was time to finish it for good. He made only one request: that the new mini-series begin where the reprints leave off. Now, there were a couple of problems with this idea, mainly that if one were to do a "true" mini-series (by that, I mean a series that presents the featured character in a way that forever changes the readers' perception of him or her), one would HAVE to ignore some of the stories that followed the original run. Otherwise, it would be like seeing the beginning and end of the movie—and THEN seeing the middle parts. Readers would KNOW what happened to Deadman after the mini-series ended ... unless we picked up the threads left behind in the original run of STRANGE ADVENTURES and ran with them, creating, in effect, a NEW Deadman.

And that's what we did. Die-hard Deadman fans may notice some inconsistencies between our story and some of our hero's post-STRANGE ADVENTURES tales. They're there because that's where Deadman was headed at the time we left him in the original series. At the end of THIS series, Deadman will become a character with a new "raison d'être." We think it works—we'll have to wait and see what you, the readers, think.

Anyway, in our last issue, we'll take account of those continuity freaks among you, and let you all know which stories will continue to fit into the Deadman continuity and which won't. We'd like to do that right now, but we don't want to give anything away by inference ... and besides, we'd rather keep you guessing. All we can say about what's to come is that it's definitely not what you're expecting—but the ground-

work is all there in the original STRANGE ADVENTURES Deadman tales.

By the way, if you've never read those original tales, we're sure you can pick up copies of either the original comics (expensive) or of our seven-issue Deluxe Reprint Series (cheep!) at comic book specialty shops across the country. And while you're there, check out some of the other stuff—we guarantee you'll come back for more!

Till next month (gasp)—

—Andy Helfer

NEXT MONTH: Well, it looks like next issue's title SHOULD be "Boston Brand: Undead Deadman!" But it's not—Boston Brand's scheduled to make a comeback ... but what will be the cost? Plus: The introduction of some NEW supporting characters—and the reintroduction of an OLD villain! Don't miss it!

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