

STORMWATCH: TEAM ACHILLES #9

"IF ON A SUMMER'S DAY A TRAVELLER"

by

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Third Draft 01/15/03

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StormWatch: Team Achilles
"If, On A Summer's Day A Traveller"
Written by Micah Ian Wright
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Okay so this story is actually a series of unconnected short stories, so I think it'd be good to think of each of them as separate issues of different books... to try and use different panel shapes in each story (4 panel grid for one, 4 horizontal panels for another, 6 panel grid for a different one) and a completely different color palette for each as well.

PAGE 1

PANEL ONE

Big splash panel. The title and creator credits go here.

In the panel, a Man, Aaron Williams, dismounts from a train car onto an 18th Century Train Station. The train station is crowded with men and women in 18th century period dress. A huge steam engine from ye olde days pumps out huge gouts of steam around everyone's feet.

Crowds of people are on the platform, greeting one another. A conductor stands by the train engine. EVERYONE is dressed in 18th century clothing... poor people, wealthy people - women in bustles & whale-bone corsets, etc.

In his hand, Aaron holds a old-style red leather briefcase.

AARON (CAPTION)

It had been some time since I'd been to The City. Things had not changed much.

PANEL TWO

Aaron walks though a crowded train station. Everyone is moving in the same direction as he is, except for two men in black suits, black bowlers and wearing those old 18th-century small, square sunglasses. They're staring right at Aaron. The men are BEN SANTINI and LUIS CISCO.

AARON (CAPTION)

An escort from the secret police were at the station to greet me, as usual.

PANEL THREE

Aaron walks through an ornate train station... all marble & old world detailing... think Grand Central Station. The 18th-Century Santini and Cisco follow him at a distance.

AARON (CAPTION)

I wasn't worried about the secret police. They had tried before to stop me. They would fail this time as well.

PAGE 2

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PANEL ONE

Aaron walks down a crowded street, red briefcase in hand.

AARON (CAPTION)

The difficulty of my task lay in handing off the materials in such a way that they would not notice.

PANEL TWO

Aaron sits in an outdoor cafe, drinking a cup of coffee. Two tables over, are Cisco and Santini, starkly staring at Aaron through their little black glasses. Serving them coffee is CHARLES PINCKNEY, the Stormwatch sniper-team spotter, dressed in a little french waiter outfit.

AARON (CAPTION)

Which was difficult because to elude my pursuers would be to confirm for them that I was their target.

PANEL THREE

Close on the red leather briefcase at Aaron's feet.

AARON (CAPTION)

If the goal was to be reached, it would be through **misdirection**. While they stared at the **obvious...**

PANEL FOUR

Aaron hands a sheaf of small, odd-shaped paper money along with his bill to a waitress whose face is off-panel. Maybe the money is really long and thin or perhaps round? It should be strange, though.

AARON (CAPTION)

I passed the information in **another**, less obvious manner.

PANEL FIVE

In the distance at panel left, Aaron stands up from his table at the cafe, picking up his briefcase. Panel right, Santini & Cisco watch him intently. Panel center, in the foreground a waitress, her back to camera, counts through Aaron's odd money. In between two of the bills is a small envelope.

AARON (CAPTION)

I couldn't **blame** the Secret Police for wanting to intercept the information **before** it could be delivered.

PAGE 3

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PANEL ONE

The waitress opens the envelope, pulling a small card from it. On it in elaborate cursive is a name which we can't clearly read.

AARON (CAPTION)

After all, the card held the name of one of **them** who was to be **killed** for failing **The State**.

PANEL TWO

Aaron walks past Cisco & Santini, tipping his hat in their direction. They look at him with hatred on their faces, behind their weird little glasses.

AARON (CAPTION)

I briefly wondered **which** of **them** it would be, but quickly dismissed it from my mind. They were mere animals, after all, good at their jobs, but not worth my pity.

PANEL THREE

Aaron's POV. The waitress is in front of him. It's Galena Golovin from Stormwatch! She's carrying the card in her hand, holding it out towards camera at Aaron's eye level.

The card reads "Aaron Williams" in flowing cursive.

In her other hand, at her waist, Galena holds an MP5 submachine gun.

AARON (CAPTION)

Aaron Willams... but... that was **MY** name!

PANEL FOUR

Close on Aaron's face. He's sweating, eyes bugging, upset looking.

AARON

No, that can't be... that's not the way the story is supposed to go!

PANEL FIVE

Wider shot. Aaron radiates energy and light from within his body as everything around him dissolves... like a nuclear bomb going off inside his body.

AARON

THAT'S NOT THE WAY MY STORY IS SUPPOSED TO GO!

PAGE 4

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ARRANGED LIKE 6-PANEL GRID BUT WITH ONE WIDE PANEL IN PANEL #3.

PANEL ONE

A huge dome of multicolored light obscures the details of a small town in the distance. A highway sign in the foreground on panel right reads "Elyria, Kansas Pop. 835"

PANEL TWO

Angle on MAJOR DWAYNE GIBBONS, an African-American US Special Forces Major standing next to KHALID TEFIBI who stands and types on a portable computer console mounted on the tailgate of a Sport Utility Vehicle. The back of the truck is filled with small tv screens and computer monitors which are filled with obscure readings and color bars.

One of the monitors is spiking on a graph.

TEFIBI

It's happening again.

SPECIAL FORCES MAJOR

WHAT is happening again?

TEFIBI

The neutrino surge... the light show should start momentarily.

PANEL THREE

Wide establishing shot. Several soldiers stand in and around gun-mounted Humvees. Several Federal Agents in suits stand around beside black four-door Ford Crown Victorias. The soldiers and feds all look towards the town. The dome looks the same as in panel one.

SPECIAL FORCES MAJOR

I don't see shit.

PANEL FOUR

Suddenly the dome is illuminated with a bright light from within, the shape of the town's buildings are all malformed and deranged. Beams of bright light shine out of the dome and into the sky like sun through rain clouds. Everyone throws a hand over their faces.

SPECIAL FORCES MAJOR

What's going on inside that town? Are your people alive or dead? I need a sit-rep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PANEL FIVE

On Tefibi & the Special Forces Major. Their faces all lit up from the lightshow, arms up, casting shadows across their faces. The special forces major's eyes are narrowed, concerned look on his face.

TEFIBI

Here's your sit-rep: I've got no idea what's going on. This pattern has repeated roughly ten minutes after each team member insertion. I don't know the connection.

SPECIAL FORCES MAJOR

Maybe your team members are getting killed by whatever's in there.

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SIX-PANEL GRID

PANEL ONE

BLAKE COLEMAN steps out of a Project Entry portal behind and between Tefibi and the Special Forces Major.

COLEMAN

That's a pretty negative attitude, Dwayne.

SPECIAL FORCES MAJOR

(starting to turn)

Who the goddamn...

PANEL TWO

SF Major and Coleman shake hands, two-fisted shake. Old friends, happy to see one another.

SPECIAL FORCES MAJOR

Blake Coleman! Goddamn, man, I heard you died in some International Operations clusterfuck!

COLEMAN

People hear the damndest things about me and ain't none of 'em true. Me and Ben Santini was caught in an I/O Charlie Foxtrot, but we're both still vertical.

PANEL THREE

Tefibi points to the still-glowing town of Elmyria. The smiles have vanished off everyone's faces.

TEFIBI

Assuming that Major Gibbons isn't right about Santini getting greased in Hicksville.

PANEL FOUR

The three men turn their backs on the glowing lights.

COLEMAN

Catch me up on what's going on here.

SPECIAL FORCES MAJOR

Three days ago a power company crew was repairing a problem with the local grid.

SPECIAL FORCES MAJOR

They returned with a crazy story that no one could believe. The town had been turned into Ancient Rome or some shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PANEL FIVE

The Major points at a group of Men in Black with Black Shades and little radio earpieces.

SPECIAL FORCES MAJOR

Finally, the State Police came out here, and a bunch of 'em disappeared in the town. They alerted the FBI. FBI passed it up the ladder to the Civil Defense Administration.

TEFIBI

They're the ones who called Stormwatch in.

SPECIAL FORCES MAJOR

They're also the ones who ordered your teammates to go in. I don't think they like you and yours very much.

PANEL SIX

Coleman looks at Tefibi and points his finger in his face.

COLEMAN

You. Stay away from them.

TEFIBI

No fucking kidding! I haven't even told them my name yet.

COLEMAN

Well, don't. I need you here, not in Camp X-Ray. Keep your head down and your mouth shut.

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SIX-PANEL GRID

PANEL ONE

One of the Feds approaches Coleman. Tefibi turns his back and whistles, trying to look nonchalant.

AGENT JONES

Hi. Blake Coleman?

COLEMAN

That's me. Sergeant Major Blake Coleman, United Nations StormWatch. And you are?

PANEL TWO

Close on the Fed. He's every pale, snotty whitebread lower-level company man ever. He sneers behind his government-issue ray-bans.

AGENT JONES

In charge of this situation. Special Agent Jones, Civil Defense Administration.

AGENT JONES

Let me clarify the situation here, Sergeant. This is American sovereign territory. Your United Nations people have no authority here. You were invited in to carry out **MY** orders.

PANEL THREE

Blake smiles down at the Fed. The kind of smile which says "I'm about to kill your puny weasel ass." The Fed is taken aback.

COLEMAN

So **YOU'RE** the one who ordered four of my troops not under your direct command into a situation where they faced possible death?

AGENT JONES

Well, err, that was the call of your superior, Colonel Santini. After the recon team didn't report back, he followed them in.

COLEMAN

That's not like him to send a recon team before the full group was assembled.

PANEL FOUR

The Fed looks nervous. Coleman is angry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AGENT JONES

Well, uhm, actually **I** ordered the recon. Three of your troops teleported in without any field leadership, so I put them to good use.

COLEMAN

You used **MY** team as Guinea Pigs?! Now I remember why I **hate** all you suit-wearing scumbags. International Operations, Civil Defense Administration, whatever: change the name, but the shit smells the same.

PANEL FIVE

Blake looks to Tefibi. Tefibi checks his watch.

COLEMAN

When's the rest of the team arriving?

TEFIBI

Within the next five minutes. Santini and I hit the ground running, but everyone else had to route to New York to gear up like you did.

COLEMAN

Good. We need to figure out what's going on in there. Throw together some computer shit into a portable package. When Jaeger and Jukko are onsite, we'll have them deliver it into the city.

PANEL SIX

Blake pokes Agent Jones in his lapel.

COLEMAN

That is, unless you're worried about us intruding on your precious sovereignty. If you want to keep an eye on us horrible UN folk, you're welcome to go with them.

AGENT JONES

Errr, uhm, that won't be necessary.

COLEMAN

Yeah, I didn't think so.

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PANEL ONE

Big splash panel, just like it's the first page of the comic (because we're rebooting the comic along with Aaron Williams).

The title "Staring At The Sun" goes here.

In the panel, a Man, Aaron Williams, stands dressed in a butcher's smock, staring out towards camera, hands on a low, iron railing. Next to him stands Galena Golovin, dressed in an executive business suit.

GALENA

You need to stop this.

AARON

Our affair? Because of your husband?

PANEL TWO

Reverse angle. They're looking out to sea over a low metal railing overlooking a steep cliff which drops off into the water below.

GALENA

If you don't stop, we'll be forced to kill you.

AARON

That's not the way it's supposed to go! Say what you're supposed to say!

PANEL THREE

Galena turns and faces Aaron. She's pissed. He's upset.

GALENA

Get out of my head, you little worm! Just because you think you're God, that doesn't mean-

AARON

Oh, I think It DOES mean. I think it means exactly that! What's your name?

GALENA

Galena Golovin.

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PANEL ONE

Aaron leers at Galena.

AARON

Not anymore. Now your name is Janet. Janet...
ehrr... Duckett. Janet Duckett. I like that.

AARON

Say your new name for me, Janet Duckett.

GALENA

My name is Galena Golovin.

PANEL TWO

Aaron's eyes glow around the edges. He's angry.

AARON

Janet. Ducket. SAY IT!

PANEL THREE

Galena's on her knees, blood coming from her nose, spilling down her face and all over her executive attire.

GALENA

(small type)

Galena... go... lo... vin...

PANEL FOUR

On Aaron. He's smiling. His eyes still glowing.

AARON

You're strong. Stronger than anyone in this town. But they all came around... you will too. Just give it some time.

JAEGER (O.S.)

Sorry, but you're all out of time.

PANEL FIVE

Aaron spins... standing behind him alongside the waterline is Jaeger Weiss pointing an MP5 at Aaron's chest.

AARON

And who are you, The Tin Man, come to help your friend Dorothy? Didn't they tell you, Tin Man? You can't kill The Wizard.

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PANEL ONE

Aaron snaps his fingers.

AARON

I don't want you in my story, Tin Man. Not you or your puny little gun or your knives or any of your other weapons.

PANEL TWO

Jaeger's gun is gone. His armor is off. He stands in front of Aaron nude.

AARON

Your name is Tim. Tim Sanchez. You're late for work at the 7-11, Tim. Run along now.

JAEGER

Tim Sanchez. I'm late for work. At the 7-11.

PANEL THREE

Jaeger turns and walks away towards a 7-11 alongside the waterfront which wasn't there in the previous panel.

AARON

Good boy, Tim.

PANEL FOUR

Aaron bends down and looks at the unconscious Galena.

AARON

Don't worry, Janet. Soon you'll be happy. Just like Tim. Maybe I'll have you marry one another... one big happy family.

PANEL FIVE

Videocamera shot of the same sequence, from a different angle.

JUKKO (OVER RADIO)

Tefibi, are you getting this?

PAGE 10

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SIX-PANEL GRID (BUT WITH ONE BIG PANEL ON TOP AND ONE ON BOTTOM)

PANEL ONE

Widescreen. Outside the town. Tefibi, Coleman, Gibbons and Agent Jones are crowded around the TV Screen. A fuzzy, distorted image is coming through of Jaeger's naked walk.

COLEMAN

Just barely, but it's coming through. What's your situation there, Jukko?

JUKKO (OVER RADIO)

I'm fine. I do not believe that this creature knows someone has entered the town unless he or someone in his thrall sees us.

PANEL TWO

The light from the TV sets reflects onto Coleman's face as he speaks into a mike.

COLEMAN

Have you seen Santini, Cisco or Pinckney yet?

JUKKO (OVER RADIO)

Negative. Jaeger and I barely made it through town... the landscape changes quite rapidly here. It's difficult to get your bearings. This monster seems to be rewriting reality to please himself.

COLEMAN

All the more reason to stay out of sight. We'll get back to you with orders in a little bit. Coleman out.

PANEL THREE

Coleman looks at the Agent. The Agent shrugs his shoulders.

AGENT JONES

So now what?

COLEMAN

I don't know. Strategic planning isn't really my thing, y'know? Usually Santini points me at a target and says "shoot" and I shoot. Any ideas, Agent Jones?

AGENT JONES

I'm unsure of a course of action at this point. Er, maybe you should shoot him? That's what I was going to have Major Gibbons do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COLEMAN

Yeah, see, THAT much I can come up with on my own, thanks.

PANEL FOUR

Widescreen. Tefibi frowns and shakes his head at the Agent.

TEFIBI

There are three ways a bullet kills someone:
First Way is it can destroy your Central Nervous System. Brain shot, two inches behind the eyes. Instant Ragdoll. Clinical death in less than a tenth of a second.

TEFIBI

Second Way: heart or aorta shot. Depressurizes you, destroys your circulatory system. Clinical Death in fifteen to twenty seconds.

TEFIBI

Third way: a bullet hits a major blood-bearing organ and you bleed to death internally. Anywhere from three to twenty minutes.

AGENT JONES

Who gives a shit? Dead is dead!

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PANEL ONE

Tefibi points at the agent.

TEFIBI

Yeah, but there's a lot of power fluxing around in that dome. Point being, you pop that guy, what's going to happen to this town?

TEFIBI

Especially if it takes this guy twenty minutes to die?

AGENT JONES

Any civilian casualties are Collateral Damage. The government will pay the survivors's families.

TEFIBI

You people are sick. Look, I think our best bet is to talk this guy down. Get him to shut it all off, walk away.

PANEL TWO

Coleman's not happy about this idea.

COLEMAN

Talk him down? Great idea. Maybe I should send Agent Happy Jones here?

TEFIBI

Send Dr. Grunier. Didn't she used to do crisis negotiation for the French Gendarmerie?

TEFIBI

Send her in. She talks him down. He turns it off. And **THEN** we shoot him.

PANEL THREE

Coleman smiles and picks up a radiophone. He points at Tefibi.

COLEMAN

I knew you were good for something. See if you can find out who this guy is... Might help the Doctor do her thing.

TEFIBI

I'll run the video Jukko sent us through the state driver's license database. Not like there's a lot of people in this town.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PANEL FOUR

Tefibi leans over his computer. The screens are full of men's faces, doing that computer-based face-scanning database thing where it swaps out eyes, noses, chins, etc. Aaron's face is in the center of the main computer monitor.

TEFIBI

Done. His name is Aaron Williams. White, Male, Age 42. No wife, no kids. Mennonite.

TEFIBI

Oh, here we go. It all makes sense now.

PANEL FIVE

Reverse shot on Agent Jones and Coleman leaning in to see what Tefibi's looking at. We see them, not the screen.

AGENT JONES

He's a writer?

TEFIBI

Worse. A rejected writer. That's bad.

GRUNIER (O.S.)

No, that's good.

PANEL SIX

The three men turn to see Dr. Grunier.

COLEMAN

How do you mean, Dr. Grunier?

GRUNIER

It gives me a way to get inside his head. I have a plan. Here's what I need you to do...

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PANEL ONE

Big splash panel, just like it's the first page of the comic (because we're rebooting the comic along with Aaron Williams).

The title "Burning Time" goes here.

In the panel, Aaron Williams is in running clothes, jogging down a crowded urban street. Huge skyscrapers dominate the scene. Like a sidewalk in NYC or something. He's running past a pay phone. The pay phone is ringing.

SOUND E/FX

Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

AARON (CAPTION)

It's hard to run in the city. Finding a pace is difficult. People are always getting in your way, you have to jump over homeless people sleeping in the gutters, you have to worry about being robbed or hit by a car.

PANEL TWO

Aaron hops in place at a stoplight, next to a crowd of people, waiting for the light to turn red.

AARON (CAPTION)

Stop and go. Start and stop. There's always an interruption.

PANEL THREE

Aaron sprints across the crowded walkway, cars, cabs and delivery trucks piled up next to the crosswalk. Aaron is dodging around a bum who's begging for money. THE BUM IS BEN SANTINI. There is a pay phone at the far corner. It's ringing

SOUND E/FX

Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

AARON (CAPTION)

Bums. Always with their hands out. Who invited them? Why don't they just go back to where they came from?

AARON (CAPTION)

Like I said. It's difficult to run in the city.

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PANEL ONE

Aaron runs down the street, dodging a hot dog vendor. The vendor is LUIS CISCO. There is a pay phone next to the hot dog cart.

AARON (CAPTION)

Do people really eat food they buy from people on the street? I mean, how do you know that the guy's not some kind of terrorist and the hot dogs aren't full of razor blades?

SOUND E/FX

Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

PANEL TWO

Aaron runs into a park area on a dirt path. A pay phone rings next to a park bench.

SOUND E/FX

Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

AARON (CAPTION)

The park is nice, but it's too full. And at night? Forget about it. At night the park belongs to the gangs.

PANEL THREE

Aaron runs next to a museum in the middle of the park. The front of the museum reads "Williams Museum of Modern Art." There is a group of three pay phones in front of the building. One of them is ringing.

SOUND E/FX

Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

AARON (CAPTION)

I like to run near the museums... it's quiet there. Not so many cars. Except today... there's something weird...

PANEL FOUR

Aaron is on the path again, no buildings around him, only trees and park benches and short lampposts. And a payphone next to one of the benches. And it's ringing.

SOUND E/FX

Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

AARON (CAPTION)

Today, the phone is ringing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PANEL FIVE

Aaron stops running and looks backwards down the path. We can see the three pay phones next to the museum and two phones further away down the path.

SOUND E/FX
(above ALL of the phones)
Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

SOUND E/FX
Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

SOUND E/FX
Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

AARON (CAPTION)
Today ALL of the phones are ringing?

PAGE 14**14**

PANEL ONE

Aaron shakes his head.

SOUND E/FX
Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

AARON
That's not right. This is supposed to be my
quiet place. I didn't make the phone ring.

PANEL TWO

Aaron's a bit panicked. He shouts at the phone.

SOUND E/FX
Brrringgg. Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

AARON
STOP THAT RINGING! STOP IT!

PANEL THREE

The phone stops ringing. Aaron smiles.

AARON
That's more like it.

PANEL FOUR

The phone starts ringing again. Aaron's spooked.

SOUND E/FX
Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

AARON
Aaah!

PANEL FIVE

Aaron runs. Do something EC-comicsy here with a panel full of pay phones ringing, driving him crazy.

SOUND E/FX
Brrringgg. Brrringgg. Brrringgg. Brrringgg.
Brrringgg. Brrringgg. Brrringgg. Brrringgg.

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PANEL ONE

Aaron runs through a crowd of Businessmen in suits.

AARON

Can't be happening, this isn't happening...

PANEL TWO

All of the businessmen's cel phones start ringing. They all reach into their pockets.

SOUND E/FX

Beep Beep. Beep Beep. Beep Beep. Beep Beep.

PANEL THREE

Aaron stops running and looks around him, terrified. The businessmen are all talking on their phones.

BUSINESSMAN

Hello?

BUSINESSMAN

Hello?

BUSINESSMAN

Hello?

BUSINESSMAN

Hello?

BUSINESSMAN

Hello?

BUSINESSMAN

Hello? Sure, hold on.

PANEL FOUR

Aaron's POV as the Businessman offers his phone to Aaron.

BUSINESSMAN

It's for you, Aaron.

PANEL FIVE

Close on Aaron's face as he listens.

AARON

Hello?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE (OVER RADIO)

Now you listen to me. Marie is here, she'll be waking up in a little while, but she's tied up and she can't get away. Remember this address. One Forty Seven West Fifty Fourth, Apartment 12B. If you come and get her, fine. If not, there's a cannister of kerosene beneath her chair with a timer on it. In fifteen minutes, she'll go up in flames.

(Sound E/FX)

CLICK!

AARON

But... I don't know anyone named Marie!

PAGE 16**16**

PANEL ONE

Aaron stares at the cel phone in his hand. The Businessman smiles at him.

BUSINESSMAN

Good news, I hope.

PANEL TWO

The businessman bends over to pick up his phone as Aaron runs away.

NO DIALOG

PANEL THREE

Aaron hurtles down a busy city sidewalk, tons of people in his way. He's running towards a building with a 147 in gold lettering on the awning. A well-dress doorman hails a cab for a wealthy woman in furs exiting the building.

NO DIALOG

PANEL FOUR

Aaron jogs up a stairwell at breakneck speed.

NO DIALOG

PANEL FIVE

Close on the door to Apartment 12B.

NO DIALOG

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PANEL ONE

In the background, panel left, Aaron hits the door with his shoulder, smashing it open. In the foreground, panel right is Grunier's face, a gag in her mouth, her head pointed at camera. Her eyes look backwards and to her right over her shoulder at him.

SOUND E/FX

Ka-kraack!

PANEL TWO

Aaron approaches Grunier, who is tied to a kitchen chair. Below the chair is a jerry-can of Kerosene with an egg-timer bomb set atop it. Lots of wires, etc. Grunier's eyes are wide with fear.

GRUNIER

(through her gag)

Mmmmp! Aaarnph!

PANEL THREE

Aaron takes off her gag.

GRUNIER

Quick, untie my hands!

AARON

Who are you? What's going on here?

PANEL FOUR

Grunier stands, rubbing her wrists.

GRUNIER

I'm you, idiot! Well, part of you. I'm your subconscious and you're killing us!

AARON

What? That... that doesn't make any sense!

GRUNIER

Does ANY of this make sense? Listen to me, you're at home right now, you're in a coma and you need to wake up or we're both going to die!

PANEL FIVE

Grunier squats, tearing at the wires on the bomb underneath the chair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRUNIER

It's all a fever dream, Aaron. The gas in your house is leaking from a small pipe behind your stove. This kerosene? A metaphor.

AARON

No, this isn't right, it's not true.

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PANEL ONE

Grunier whirls up and points her finger in Aaron's face.

GRUNIER

What's more likely, Aaron? That you woke up with the powers of God or that you're asleep and you're dreaming all of this?

AARON

I... I...

PANEL TWO

Aaron sets his jaw and crosses his arms.

AARON

If this is a dream, then I don't want to wake up.

GRUNIER

Fine. Then sit down, do nothing and we'll both die. Can't you smell it? The gas? Creeping into the room?

PANEL THREE

Aaron sniffs the air. Grunier circles him, pointing at the apartment.

SOUND E/FX

(above Aaron)

Sniff Sniff.

GRUNIER

Look where you are! This isn't some apartment at 147 west 54th street in New York or Paris or whatever Dream City you've got us in!

PANEL FOUR

Grunier points to the couch under a wide window with a beautiful view of Central Park outside.

GRUNIER

This is 147 West 3rd Street in Elyria, Kansas! You're unconscious right now, passed out from propane inhalation. Now if you don't wake your ass up and get outside, you're going to die!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PANEL FIVE

The couch has changed somewhat in shape. The wide window now shows an ugly view of dusty, ugly Elyria, Kansas. Trailer homes loom in the distance.

A ghostly, pale drawn-out Aaron Williams is on the couch, a stream of drool pouring from the corner of his mouth. The real Aaron is staring at him in shock.

GRUNIER

You see it now, don't you? You're right there, Aaron! Now just shut all of this out, wake up, crawl outside and live the rest of your life!

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SIX-PANEL GRID WITH ONE WIDE PANEL ON BOTTTOM

PANEL ONE

Angle on Coleman and Tefibi staring at one of Tefibi's screens.

COLEMAN

Holy Cow, it's freaking working!

TEFIBI

She's in the zone, man... look, he's even creating a little gassed-out version of himself on the couch.

PANEL TWO

Over their shoulders on the tv they're staring at. Grunier and Aaron continue to talk.

AARON (OVER RADIO)

But my life sucks! I'm a total failure! Even if this isn't real, it feels good!

GRUNIER

Aaron, our life isn't over! There's still time for us to succeed at everything we want to do! Why throw it away for an illusion?

COLEMAN

Where's this image coming from, Tefibi?

PANEL THREE

Tefibi smiles.

TEFIBI

The idiot has a web-cam in his bedroom. For meeting chicks online or whatever. Most people don't know that those things can be accessed from outside to spy on you when you aren't using it.

PANEL FOUR

Tefibi looks past Coleman.

TEFIBI

Hey, where the fuck are THEY going?

PANEL FIVE

Widescreen. The 12-man special forces unit and all of the feds are driving towards the multicolored dome.

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TEFIBI

Motherfuckers! They're going to break this
whole thing wide open before it's ready!

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PANEL ONE

Inside the apartment. Grunier has her hand on Aaron's shoulder, a kindly, gentle look on her face.

GRUNIER

Aaron, just let this all go... wake up, go back to our life...

AARON

You're right, I need to wake up. I'm just so confused.

GRUNIER

It's the gas. It makes you groggy.

PANEL TWO

The lavish apartment has reverted to a piece of shit house in the middle of Kansas. The furniture is ugly and old, the carpet stained, water stains on the ceiling, etc.

GRUNIER

That's it, Aaron, put it all away, make it like it was, and wake up...

PANEL THREE

Outdoors, the black Federal Crown Vics followed by the SF Humvees drive down the center of a crazily-angled street. The houses and buildings along both sides are insane half-city half-hillbilly cracker town buildings as the city in Aaron's mind dissolves back into reality.

NO DIALOG

PANEL FOUR

Coleman on the radio.

COLEMAN

Jukko, come in, do you read me?

JUKKO

Barely. There's -sffffkkkkksss- interference is high. Come back?

COLEMAN

The Feds and the Army have jumped the gun. They're on the way to attack Aaron but he hasn't been shut down yet. If they get there before Grunier finishes the job, that town and everyone in it is dead.

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PANEL ONE

Jukko looking down the barrel of a gun at camera, a huge green scope obscuring one of his eyes.

JUKKO

Coleman, how good is your relationship with this Army commander?

COLEMAN (OVER RADIO)

I saved his life several times, why?

JUKKO

Because I'm about to end this in the quickest way possible and you're going to owe your friend a big favor for covering this up.

PANEL TWO

Close on the windshield of the lead Federal car. Inside the car, Jones is on a handheld radio, excited and angry-looking.

AGENT JONES

My map has it a half-mile past that gas station. Your team will hit the target with maximum force and obliterate everything and anyone who gets in your way.

SPECIAL FORCES MAJOR

Agent, this order is complete bullshit, Stormwatch hasn't finished their-

AGENT JONES

Fuck Stormwatch! I don't really give a shit! You'll do what I say or-

PANEL THREE

Same shot, a star-field hole appears in the windshield and the driver's head explodes all over Agent Jones.

SOUND E/FX

Thwaaaaaakt!

AGENT JONES

The Fuck?

PANEL FOUR

Over the shoulder shot of Agent Jones trying to shove aside his driver and turn the wheel away from an oncoming Gas Station that his car is hurtling towards.

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CONTINUED:

AGENT JONES

Aaaaaaaah!

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PANEL ONE

Aaron twists his head towards at the sound of a distant explosion.

SOUND E/FX

Kwaahoooooooooom!

AARON

What was that?

PANEL TWO

Grunier twists Aaron's neck in the same direction it was already turning, snapping his neck. His eyes roll back in his head, dead.

SOUND E/FX

Crrriik!

AARON

Uhn...

PANEL THREE

Jukko in front of a small one-story shithole of a house, rifle on his hip.

Grunier is coming out the front door with Aaron's corpse in the fireman's carry.

JUKKO

Nice job. The town seems to have reverted to normal.

JUKKO

Getting yourself a souvenir?

GRUNIER

Bringing him with me. Unless you'd rather we left him here for the CDA to find and experiment on and maybe someday find out how to replicate what he was doing?

JUKKO

No. I'll carry him if you like.

PANEL FOUR

Grunier moves towards a Project Entry teleport ring between the house and the Army Humvees which have pulled up front.

GRUNIER

No, I take out my own garbage. Besides, you need to go find Santini, Cisco, Pinckney, Golovin and Weiss.

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GRUNIER

Time for you to earn your pay, Finn.

PANEL FIVE

Jukko smiles as he watches the Doctor continue past the Army humvees, humping Aaron's dead body back to the Stormwatch SUV several miles away.

JUKKO

Now THAT is a woman after my own heart.

THE END, BABY!

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