

MYSTERY MEN



THE
GOLDEN
AGE

MYSTERY MEN

THE GOLDEN AGE

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**WHO
ARE
THE**

MYSTERY MEN



**DAVID LISS
PATRICK ZIRCHER
ANDY TROY**



MARVEL
LIMITED SERIES
1 of 5

□ NEW YORK CITY, 1932 □

Maybe I'm not the most law-abiding citizen around.



This--this *Depression*, they're calling it--is *crushing* those people down there on the street.

But up here in the *penthouses*, it's jewels and champagne.



You can't tell me that's right.

So my little *capers*...



...well, let's just say I have no trouble sleeping at night.





DENNIS PIPER!
YOU'RE FINALLY
HERE!

THAT
CHARMING GIRL
OF YOURS HAS
BEEN GOING OUT
OF HER MIND.
WHAT KEPT
YOU?

OH,
THIS AND
THAT.



I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE WORLD IS
COMING TO. FIRST, THIS MASKED
BURGLAR, THE OPERATIVE, WON'T
LEAVE OUR SORT OF PEOPLE ALONE.
NOW THERE'S THIS COSTUMED
VIGILANTE, THE REVENANT...
AND THEY SAY HE'S
COLORED.

FAR MORE
TERRIFYING, I
AGREE. THE DAILY BUGLE
IS RIGHT TO CONDEMN
HIM AS A MONSTER.



I'M SO GLAD
YOU'RE HERE. I
DON'T BELONG
WITH THESE
PEOPLE.

THEY'RE SPOILED
SNOBS, ALICE. THEY
DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S
LIKE TO GROW UP POOR
OR TO CLAW FOR
EVERYTHING IN
LIFE.

YOU
EARNED YOUR
SPOT ON BROADWAY.
YOU'RE A BEAUTIFULL,
BRILLIANT GIRL...
THEY'RE THE ONES
NOT WORTHY
OF YOU.



I--
I'VE BEEN
ROBBED!
CALL THE
POLICE!

WHAT
A WORLD,
HUH?

THE NEXT NIGHT.



IS THAT GORGEOUS GENERAL OF YOURS COMING BY TONIGHT?

I TELL YOU WHAT, ALICE. YOUR DENNIS IS A SWELL FELLA BUT I'D THROW HIM OVER IN A HEARTBEAT FOR A POWERFUL MAN IN A UNIFORM.

AND THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND ME, SALLY.

THE GENERAL IS AN OLD FRIEND. HE'S GOING TO INTRODUCE ME TO A FILM DIRECTOR TONIGHT. HE SAYS I'M SURE TO BE OFFERED A ROLE.

DENNIS HAS ALL THAT MONEY AND I COME FROM NOTHING. I WANT TO SHOW HIM I CAN BE SOMEBODY ON MY OWN.

I DON'T WANT TO FEEL LIKE A BURPEN TO HIM.



YOUR MILITARY MAN IS HERE, ALICE.

IF YOU EVER GET TIRED OF HIM, YOU BE SURE TO LET ME KNOW. I COULD EAT HIM WITH A SPOON.

I SWEAR. THE TWO OF YOU!



I HOPE I DIDN'T KEEP YOU WAITING.

NOT AT ALL, MY DEAR.

I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR ALL YOU'VE OFFERED TO DO FOR ME.



I AM DOING NOTHING MORE THAN BRINGING TWO TALENTED FRIENDS TOGETHER.

TRULY, THE PLEASURE IS MINE.



WH-WHERE DID ALICE GO? SHE WAS HERE A MINUTE AGO, WASN'T SHE?

THOUGHT SHE WAS... BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER.



ARE YOU SURE THIS DIRECTOR OF YOURS DOESN'T HAVE ANY FUNNY IDEAS? BECAUSE I CAN'T DO THAT.

I'M IN LOVE WITH PENNIS.

I WOULD NEVER BRING YOU IF I HAD ANY DOUBTS. YOU ARE SAFE WITH ME. YOU KNOW THAT.

I... I DO.



I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHERE'S THE DIRECTOR? I THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO MEET US HERE.



IS HE BELOW PECK?



D-PENNIS...



24 HOURS LATER.

I have sources all over the city. Money gets you any information you want.

Like this building, with its hard case for a landlord.

Six tenants to be *evicted* at the end of the month if they don't come up with the rent--which the landlord jacked up.

Half the people in the city are out of work. Where does this bird think he's going to find new tenants?

No one is getting evicted this month.

DAILY BUGLE

REVENANT STRIKES AGAIN: WHO IS THIS MYSTERY MAN??
Alice Starr

BROADWAY ACTRESS FOUND DEAD ON BEACH
 The Director's Name to Be Found in New York Commercial Register




□ THE NEXT DAY. □

I don't remember
a whole lot after
I saw that paper.

I don't *want* to remember.
I don't want to *know*.



**KNOCK
KNOCK
KNOCK**



WE UNDERSTAND YOU KNEW THAT BROADWAY SKIRT, ALICE STARR. KNEW HER PRETTY WELL.



AIN'T THAT WHAT THEY SAY, BARTLETT?



THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY.

HEY, TAYLOR. DON'T YOU THINK THINGS LOOK PRETTY ROUGH IN HERE? MAYBE PIPER HERE IS FEELING GUILTY ABOUT SOMETHING.



I KNOW THE STORY, PIPER. YOUR FATHER'S GOT FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES AND YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE OFF-LIMITS.

BUT MAYBE THAT'S NOT SO TRUE ANYMORE. MAYBE DADDY'S CUT YOU LOOSE.

YOU FIND WHO KILLED HER?



HEY, TAYLOR. HE WANTS TO KNOW IF WE FOUND THE MURDERER.

BUT YOU KNOW WHAT? I THINK WE JUST DID.

That stench in the air is the smell of burning bridges.

There's no going back.



Sometimes you make your mistakes with your eyes wide *open*.

Sometimes you don't have a *choice*.



Nowhere to go but forward. All the way.



They *pushed* me to this.



TIME TO START SINGING.



Now I was going to push *back*.

There was no love lost between me and my father, but he always kept the heat off--to protect **himself**, not because he gave a **damn** about me.

Looks like the rules have changed. The coppers want to set me up for Alice's murder. My father is either letting it happen--or **making** it happen.

Either way, I'll have to grieve later.

WORD CAME DOWN THAT YOU WAS TO BE THE **PATSY**.

I DON'T KNOW NOTHING ELSE.



THEN IT'S NIGHTY-NIGHT TIME FOR YOU, OFFICER.
I HOPE YOU SAID YOUR PRAYERS.

BLAM



JEEZ, BARTLETT. I ALWAYS FIGURED IF ONE OF US WET HIS PANTS IN THE LINE OF DUTY, IT WOULD BE **ME**.

I FEEL VERY **RELIEVED**, SO TO SPEAK.



More cops on the street, so the front door isn't an option.

I always had a plan in case I needed to lam off, but I'd rather be **dead** than need it for **this**.

But I wasn't dead, and Alice **was**. They should've killed **me** too.

They'd **see** that soon enough.





GENTLEMEN, MADAM.

THE COUNTRY IS IN ECONOMIC CHAOS, AND WE CONTINUE TO THRIVE.

THE MINING OPERATIONS IN WEST VIRGINIA, THE ELECTIONS WE CONTROLLED, THE POLICE DEPARTMENTS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THAT WE OWN, THE UNIONS WE'VE PUT DOWN.

OUR MOVE INTO THE NARCOTICS TRADE HAS PROVED MOST PROFITABLE, AS HAVE OUR EFFORTS TO AUGMENT THE AMOUNT OF NICOTINE IN CIGARETTES.

THE NEWLY OPENED EMPIRE STATE BUILDING.

AND YET I SENSE YOUR UNHAPPINESS.



GENERAL, I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THIS ARCHEOLOGICAL DIG WE'RE FUNDING IN TURKEY.

YOU ARE PUTTING A LOT OF OUR RESOURCES INTO EFFORTS BY THIS PROFESSOR LEWIS GREEN. BUT I DON'T SEE HOW AN EXCAVATION OF THE RUINS OF TROY BENEFITS US.

I CANNOT DENY THAT WE HAVE DONE WELL, BUT THIS IS A BOARD, NOT A DICTATORSHIP.

I AM LOOKING FOR A-- KOFF KOFF-- LOST ITEM.



AND WHEN I FIND IT, IT WILL CHANGE EVERYTHING. YOU MAY ALL DEPEND UPON IT.

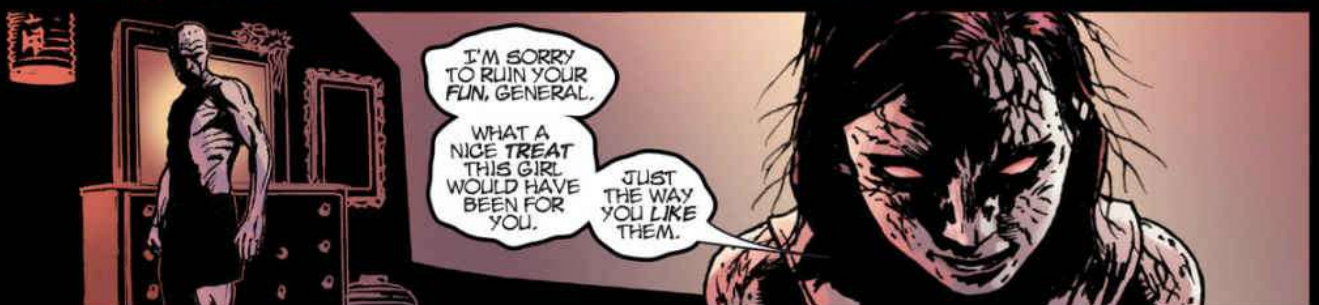
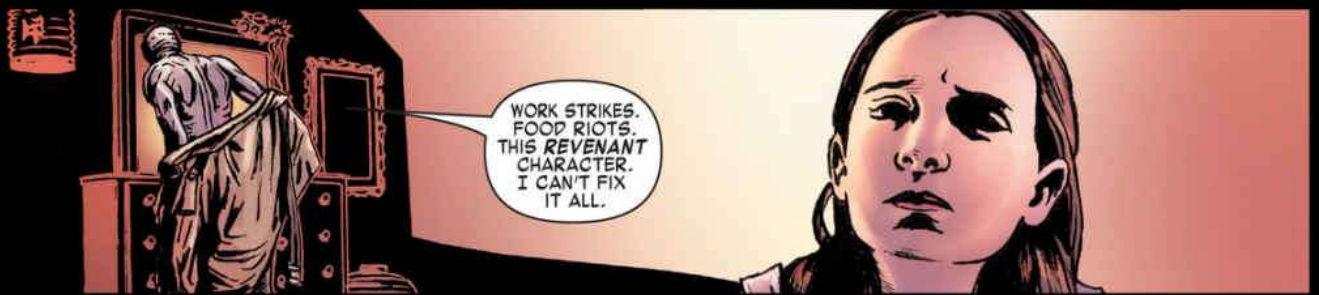
I HAVE LED YOU THUS FAR AND YOU WILL TRUST ME ON THIS.



AND NOW, GENTLEMEN, LADY, YOU WILL EXCUSE ME.



KOFF KOFF KOFF



SO, YOU SHOW YOURSELF AT LAST, NOX. NOT, AS YOU'VE NOTED, THE TIMING I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED.



I THOUGHT MY SACRIFICE WOULD HAVE ALLOWED YOU TO TAKE YOUR OWN FORM.



I AM A FEAR LORD, GENERAL. MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE.
IT WILL TAKE A GREATER OFFERING THAN THE STARR GIRL TO RESTORE ME TO MY GLORY.

I HAVE ALREADY DONE MUCH FOR YOU WITH MY LITTLE CHARM. THE LADIES FIND YOU AGREEABLE, DO THEY NOT? THEY SEE YOU AS YOU WISH THEM TO...NOT AS YOU ARE.

BUT YOU TOO HAVE DONE MUCH, AND I SHALL HONOR MY BARGAIN.

THE AMULET YOU SEEK IN THE RUINS OF TROY.

IT SHALL SOON BE YOURS.



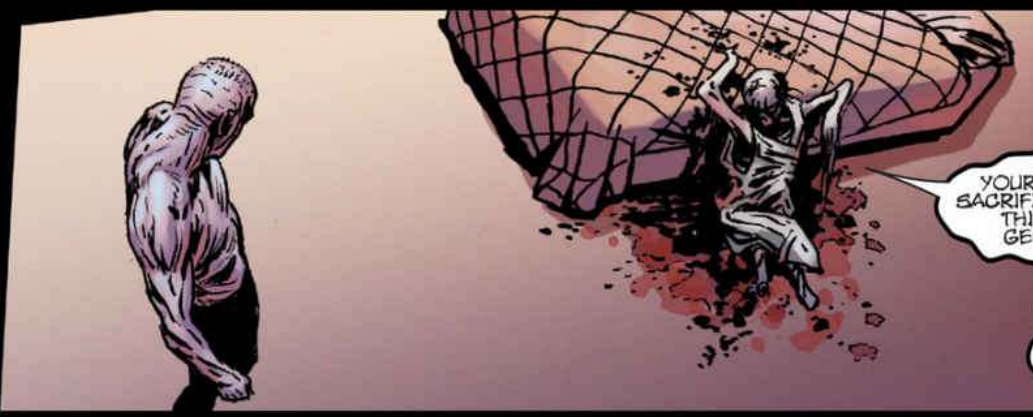
IT HAD BETTER BE. THAT SACRIFICE COST ME, NOX.



~GLUG~
I KNOW WHAT IT COST YOU. THAT IS WHAT GAVE IT POWER. IT GAVE ME THE STRENGTH TO PUT THE AMULET IN YOUR ARCHEOLOGIST'S WAY.



AND WHAT I WILL ASK OF YOU NEXT WILL GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO REGAIN MY TRUE FORM.



YOUR EARLIER SACRIFICE PAINED THIS CITY, GENERAL.

WHAT I ASK NEXT WILL WOUND THE ENTIRE NATION.

~GLUG~



I'd put a lot of deposits into the favor bank over the years, and it was time to start making *withdrawals*.

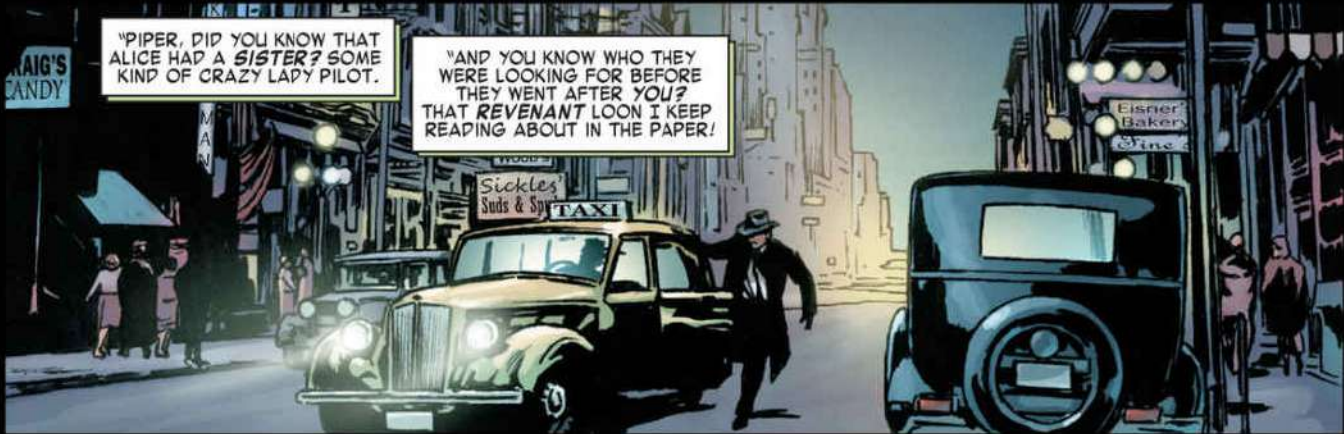
Like from *Haskell Smith*, a shamus I'd helped out of a jam once or twice.

PIPER, I WISH I KNEW WHAT TO SAY, PAL.

I NEED HELP, HASKELL. THE COPS WANT TO PIN THIS ON ME.

I HEARD THE NEWS, AND I'M ON TOP OF IT.

GET ON OVER TO MY OFFICE. I ALREADY HAVE A WIRE ON THIS.



"PIPER, DID YOU KNOW THAT ALICE HAD A *SISTER*? SOME KIND OF CRAZY LADY PILOT.

"AND YOU KNOW WHO THEY WERE LOOKING FOR BEFORE THEY WENT AFTER YOU? THAT *REVENANT LOON* I KEEP READING ABOUT IN THE PAPER!"



"I'LL SPILL MORE WHEN YOU GET HERE."





They croaked Haskell to shut him up, the poor stiff. But that meant he'd discovered *something*. Something about Alice's sister.

And he'd left notes about an air-field out in Queens, the one where the amusement park used to be.



LOOKS LIKE PIPER BLIPPED OFF ANOTHER ONE, FELLAS.



GOTCHA NOW, RICH BOY.



Not my fault they leave these cop cars just sitting around. It's like an invitation to take one.

And this *Revenant*. I didn't believe in him until tonight. For the moment, though, he was okay in my book.

Haskell's notes said Alice's sister, *Sarah*, is renting this hangar. He thought she was *living* in it, kooky as that sounds.

I don't know what else Smith wrote down in his office, but the cops are hot on my trail.

Whatever is going on, I have to talk to the sister and beat it *fast*.

GET DOWN!

It's not like I didn't hear her.

And when someone comes running in *terror*, screaming to get down, chances are, getting down is the right thing to do.





It's just that... I didn't know she would look so much like Alice.

It's like looking at a ghost. I can hardly breathe.

Also, she's putting a lot of her weight on my chest, so that doesn't help.

IT DIDN'T EXPLODE. HEY MISTER, IT DIDN'T EXPLODE!

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?

~NNHHFF~ NOT REALLY, NO.

BUT IF YOU COULD GET OFF ME, I'D LOVE TO HEAR ABOUT IT.



THE FUEL HAS GOT TO BE VOLATILE. OF COURSE IT DOES. OTHERWISE, IT'S NOT MUCH GOOD, IS IT?

BUT IT CAN'T BE TOO VOLATILE, OR ELSE IT EXPLODES IN YOUR FACE, AND NO ONE WANTS TO BLOW UP, DO THEY? KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

I'M SURE SOMEONE DOES, BUT IT'S NOT ME.

WAIT ONE MINUTE. WHO ARE YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?



I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING HERE MYSELF.

MY NAME IS DENNIS PIPER. I'M--

JEEPERS! YOU'RE ALICE'S GUY.



YEAH, I WAS.

LISTEN, SARAH, THE COPS ARE TRYING TO PIN EVERYTHING ON ME.

A FRIEND OF MINE, A PRIVATE PEEPER, POKED AROUND AND WOUND UP DEAD.

BUT NOT BEFORE HE CAME UP WITH YOUR NAME.



THAT MEANS THE COPS MIGHT BE COMING AFTER YOU. WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE.

I CAN'T JUST LEAVE. YOU'RE CRAZY IF YOU THINK I'LL ABANDON MY LAB.

I DON'T THINK YOU UNDERSTAND. THE COPS ARE IN ON THIS, AND THEY AREN'T WEARING KIP GLOVES.



OH, SHIT!

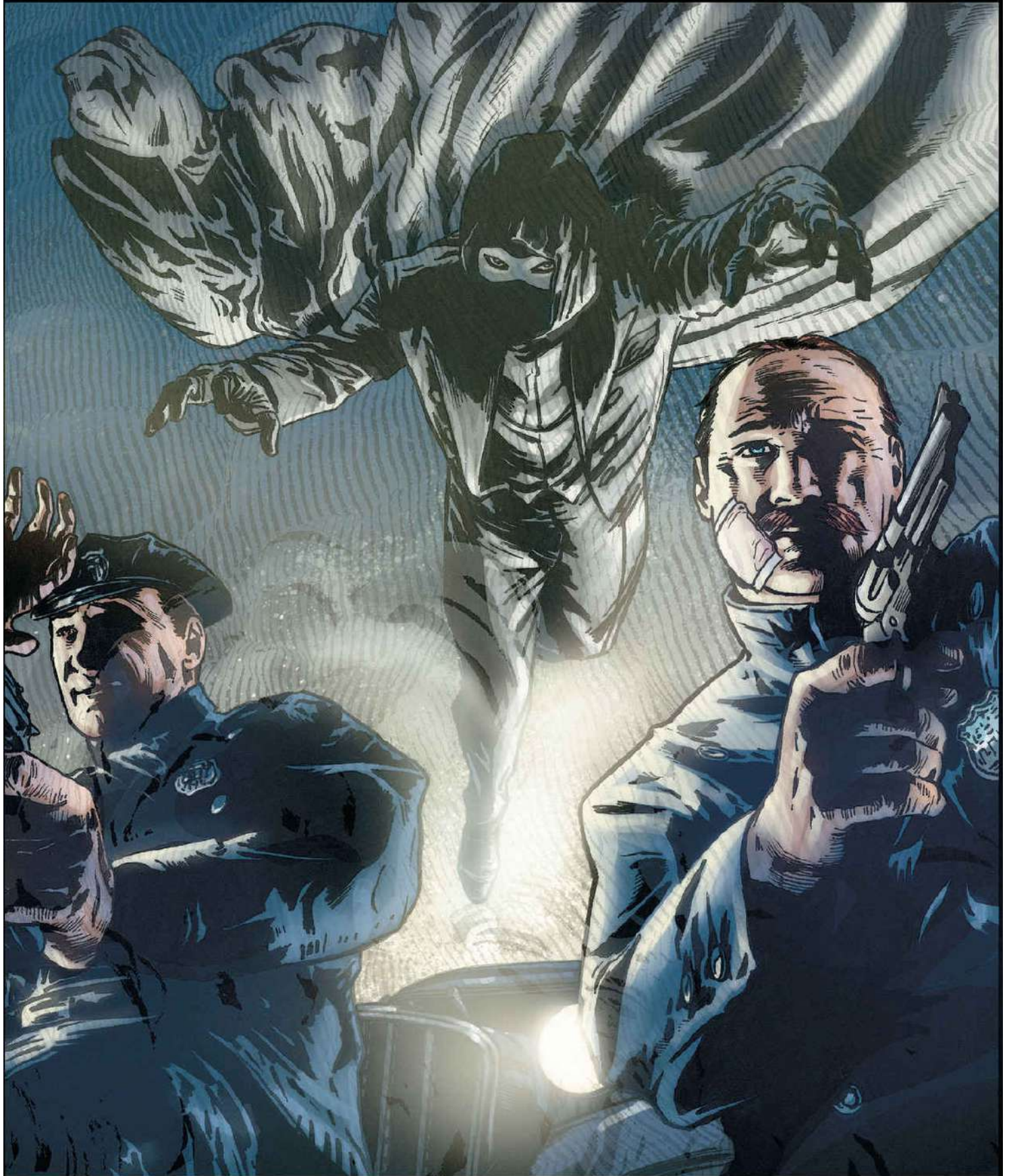


YOU GOT MORE LIVES THAN A CAT, PIPER. I'LL GRANT YOU THAT.

BUT I THINK YOU JUST RAN OUT.



CRAP. NOT THAT FOG AGAIN...









YOU SHOW
REMARKABLE
SKILL, MR.
PIPER.

YOU HAVE
MY UNDYING
GRATITUDE.



SAME
TO YOU,
PAL.

BUT YOU
WANT TO TELL ME
HOW YOU KNOW
WHO I AM--AND
WHAT ALL THIS IS
TO YOU?



I WANT TO
FIND OUT WHO
KILLED ALICE
STARR.

AND I SUGGEST
THE REVENANT AND
THE OPERATIVE FIND
OUT TOGETHER.

□ TO BE CONTINUED! □

The
OP

DATE JUNE 08	INVESTIGATOR DAVID LISS	CASE FILE MM 001
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I was still very new to writing comics when editor Bill Rosemann asked me if I was interested in writing a miniseries about pulp-era characters set in Marvel continuity. Looking back, I'm glad I was new because if I'd understood what a rare and important opportunity this was, I might have been too intimidated to accept. Creating all-new characters that evoked the pulp aesthetic but also felt like real Marvel heroes, and creating a new chapter in the history of the Marvel U. How cool is that?

Over the course of a few weeks, Bill and I hashed out what kinds of characters we wanted for this book. I thought we had some good ideas, but good ideas aren't enough, and a comic book has to look good. Bill proposed a lot of names as he searched for the right artist, and I would have been thrilled to work with any of them, but when he mentioned Patrick Zircher, I knew he was the person I wanted on this title. If you are reading this, then you are holding the book in your hands, and so you know why. *Mystery Men* is, without doubt, one of the best looking comics out there. Period.

Any story set in the New York of the early 1930s should evoke some of the real issues of the period. The '30s were about more than speakeasies, dirigibles and awesome hats, and so we threw in issues of race and gender inequity, poverty and greed, unfair labor practices, and many other gritty realities of the Depression. We also wanted the book to be set firmly in the Marvel U., so keep your eyes peeled for some familiar names and faces.

It was never anything but a blast to work on a project wedding time-honored archetypes, modern sensibilities, awesome art, and a new chapter in Marvel history. Some things went absolutely according to plan, and some evolved organically during the creative process, but the end result is something I feel lucky to have worked on. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed creating it.

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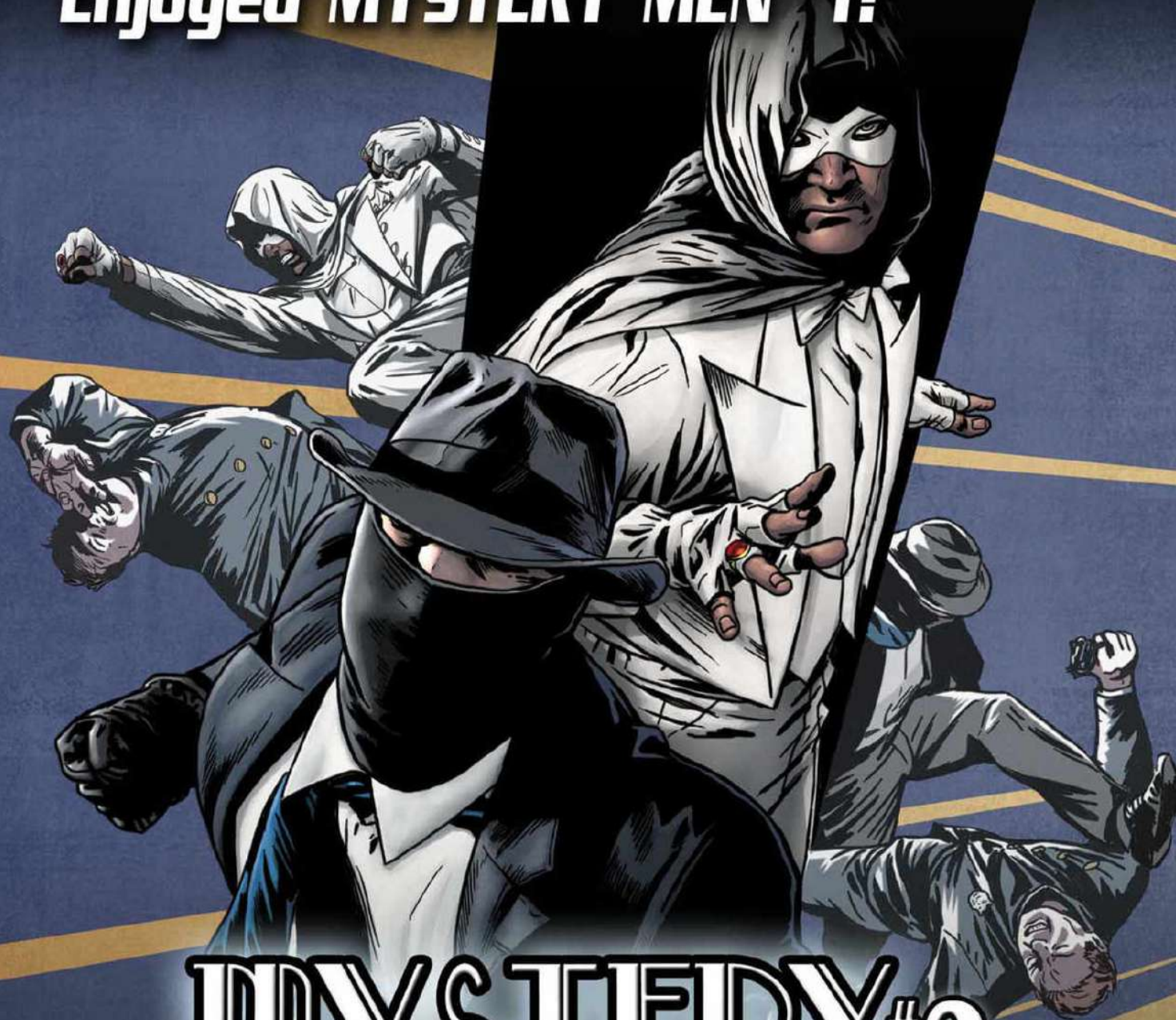
ALAN FINE
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER



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MYSTERY MEN #2

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