

Tabula Rasa

by
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Based On "Tabula Rasa"
The Original Short Story
Written by Searnold

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PAGE 01 (6 PANELS):

PANEL 1.1 - EXT. - NEW YORK ALLEY - NIGHT

Open on a blurry first person shot from the perspective of a fairly nondescript MAN sitting against a brick wall. Everything we see in this comic will be from this Man's first person perspective. Right now, the Man is resting in a dark alley, staring at his bare feet. This panel is hazy (too hazy to make out any details) because the Man is opening his eyes for the first time in hours. Also, to demonstrate to the reader that this comic will have a first person perspective, this opening panel is surrounded by black so that we can only see through the outline of two half-opened eyes.

MAN

Uuuggh...

TITLE

Tabula Rasa

CREDITS

Written By: Searnold

PANEL 1.2 - SAME

A small black panel. The man is attempting to focus his vision.

SFX

Blink.

Blink.

Blink.

PANEL 1.3 - SAME

Continued in first person (as the entire comic will be - I promise, that's the last time I'll reiterate it) we now see clearly what was too blurry to make out in the first panel. It's night time in New York City, around 2am. It has recently been raining and is still lightly drizzling. It's very cold and occasionally when people talk, you can see their breath. The Man is sitting in a dark alley staring towards his feet and legs which are sprawled out in front of him. His feet are bare and blistered. His legs are covered by a ratty pair of jeans that are a few sizes too tight.

The Man is also wearing an expensive looking light brown trench coat and an impeccably clean white button up shirt which is only buttoned on the bottom half. The shirt is very neatly tucked into his pants. His right wrist is adorned by a broken watch and his knuckles are scarred and bloody. But the focus of this panel is the Man's feet. Those are what he notices when he first opens his eyes.

MAN

Oooooof...

PANEL 1.4 - SAME

The Man sits up slightly, giving us a slightly different view of his legs and feet. He wiggles his toes, slowly. It is painful to do so.

MAN

Owww...

PANEL 1.5 - SAME

The Man sits up a bit more and rubs his face with his left hand. The hand is distorted in that semi-see-through way it gets when you place it so close to your face that each eye sees something completely different.

PANEL 1.6 - SAME

The Man now reaches slightly higher to feel the top of his head. The bottom of his palm rests on the top of his forehead and his arm rests in front of the middle of his face. Thus, his palm will be barely visible at the top of the panel, and his arm will be incredibly thin due to the optical illusion caused by putting your arm between your eyes. (If you've never experienced this particular optical illusion, put the bottom of your palm on the top of your forehead with your arm resting between your eyes. Now focus on something near the horizon and you'll see what I mean - your arm should appear very skinny.)

PAGE 02 (5 PANELS):

PANEL 2.1 - EXT. - NEW YORK ALLEY - NIGHT

The Man tilts his head up slightly as he brings his hand down to examine it. His fingers are covered in a small amount of fresh blood.

It's a slow bleed though - enough blood to easily tell that his head is injured, but not so much that the Man seems to be in any immediate danger.

MAN

Ouch.

PANEL 2.2 - SAME

Now the Man looks up. We get a clear look at the cloudy sky and the general surroundings. Just a sliver of the moon and strikingly few stars are visible. The alley is formed by the junction of a few incredibly tall brick buildings. They're dreary, with very few windows. Definitely a rundown part of town. The light bulb that should be illuminating the alley is broken.

MAN

Where am I?

PANEL 2.3 - SAME

Now the Man looks to his right - out towards the street. He has begun to stand, so our viewpoint is slightly higher than it was before. Also - across the bottom of the panel - we see his arm reaching towards the brick wall, which he's using to help himself stand. He still needs the wall to support his weight, so his head is resting on the wall, skewing his vision. The street is barely illuminated by a faint blue and red glow coming from off panel, left.

SFX (OFF PANEL, LEFT)

(Quiet) Weeeeeoooo

PANEL 2.4 - SAME

Still looking out at the street, the Man has stood ever so slightly higher. A cop car is driving down the street (from left to right) lights on, sirens blaring.

SFX

WeeeeeooooWeeeeeooooWeeeeeoooo!

PANEL 2.5 - SAME

The Man is now standing up, but still resting against the wall. Still looking out towards the street, we see the lights from the cop car fading.

SFX (OFF PANEL, RIGHT)
(Quiet) Weeeeeoooo

PAGE 03 (6 PANELS):

PANEL 3.1 - EXT. - NEW YORK ALLEY - NIGHT

Still leaning against the wall, the Man now looks back down towards his feet. This is the first time we get a good look at his entire body. Broken light bulb shards are on the ground around him.

MAN
Oh man...

PANEL 3.2 - SAME

The Man reaches his hand out in front of him as he leans forward a bit and coughs heavily. Small amounts of blood and spittle spew out of his mouth onto his hand.

SFX
Cough!
Cough!

PANEL 3.3 - SAME

Wrenching forward even further, the Man's coughs get louder. More blood and saliva spew onto his hand.

SFX
COUGH! COUGH! COUGH!

PANEL 3.4 - SAME

Now it's vomit that exudes from the Man. He is not able to get his hand out the way in time, and the vomit splatters off his hand getting all over everything everywhere.

SFX
Bleeekchk!

PANEL 3.5 - SAME

The Man begins to slide back down to the ground, leaning against the wall, next to a pile of his own vomit.

MAN
Oh God...

PANEL 3.6 - SAME

Once again sitting on the ground, the Man wipes his hands off on his jeans.

MAN
Nasty.

PAGE 04 (8 PANELS):

PANEL 4.1 - EXT. - NEW YORK ALLEY - SAME

The Man sits for a moment, slumping down against the wall. He lets out a deep sigh.

MAN
Ooooooooooooooh.
What am I even doing here?

PANEL 4.2 - SAME

The Man turns around and we get a really nice close up shot of the brick wall he's leaning against.

PANEL 4.3 - SAME

The Man places his hands on the wall and slowly...

PANEL 4.4 - SAME

Begins...

PANEL 4.5 - SAME

To stand...

PANEL 4.6 - SAME

The Man buttons the top buttons on his shirt...

PANEL 4.7 - SAME

Pulls his trench coat around himself...

PANEL 4.8 - SAME

And stumbles towards the street...

PAGES 05/06 (DOUBLE PAGE SPREAD - 2 PANELS):

PANEL 5/6.1 - EXT. - NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

A long horizontal panel that takes up half a page vertically and a double page horizontally.

The Man has exited the alley and is taking a moment to get a full view of the fairly deserted street. He's looking towards his left, examining that side of the street. His left shoulder will be visible. There's nothing particularly special about this street. It is everywhere. It is nowhere. There are a few street lamps here and there. And a few street signs every once in a while. The street itself is 2 lanes wide in each direction. The Empire State Building and other New York skyscrapers are visible off in the far distance. An unimaginably dirty and unkempt HOB0 is shuffling through a shopping cart directly across the street, on the right side of the panel. Other than that, the street is abandoned.

PANEL 5/6.2 - SAME

Same size as Panel 5/6.1, filling the rest of Pages 5 & 6. The left fifth (or so) of Panel 2 will be the same as the right fifth (or so) of Panel 1, showing that the Man has turned and is now looking down the right half of the street. The Man's right shoulder will be visible. The street looks quite similar on this side. Specifically though, near the horizon, the police car that drove by earlier has stopped in the middle of the street next to an ambulance. Their lights are still flashing. The same Hobo from Panel 1 is still visible, but is now looking across the street, straight towards the reader.

HOB0

Hey!

PAGE 07 (6 PANELS):

PANEL 7.1 - EXT. - NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

The Man turns and faces the Hobo who is now running across the street.

HOBO
Hey Pal! I thought I told you to
stay away! This is my turf! Go
find your own place!

PANEL 7.2 - SAME

The Man holds his hands out in front of him, palms open towards the Hobo. The Hobo continues approaching, and reaches into his pocket to pull out a knife.

MAN
Sir, I don't want any trouble.

HOBO
Don't you 'SIR' me!

PANEL 7.3 - SAME

The Man turns to his left and begins running down the sidewalk. We can tell he's moving because one of the street lamps has gotten conspicuously closer.

MAN
Jesus!

PANEL 7.4 - SAME

Still running, the Man turns and looks over his shoulder. The Hobo is chasing, wildly flailing his knife.

HOBO
Rawr!

MAN
Just chill out!

PANEL 7.5 - SAME

The Man turns back around and slams his face right into the lamp post.

SFX

SLAM!

PANEL 7.6 - SAME

Now lying on the floor, looking up towards the sky, the Man sees the Hobo standing over him, laughing. From this angle, the lamp post is incredibly tall.

HOBO

Hahaha! Serves ya right! Now
scram!

PAGE 08 (6 PANELS):

PANEL 8.1 - EXT. - NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

The Man sits up against the lamp post and looks back in the direction he came from. His legs are sprawled in a way similar to Panel 1.3, but this time in the background we see the Hobo walking back towards his cart, still swinging the knife randomly through the air. The cop and ambulance are still visible on the horizon.

MAN

What the Hell was that about?

PANEL 8.2 - SAME

The Man rubs his face with his hand while looking down towards the ground. The biggest image in this panel will be the Man's hand rubbing his face, but towards the bottom of the panel we will see a wallet on the ground which just fell out of the Man's jacket pocket.

PANEL 8.3 - SAME

The Man reaches for the wallet.

PANEL 8.4 - SAME

He lifts it up and opens the three flaps. On the right side we see a picture of a beautiful young lady, smiling radiantly. On the left side, we see a driver's license belonging to James Parker.

LICENSE

James Parker
792 16th Street
New York, NY 10457

MAN

James Parker. Is that me?
Oh God! I don't know my name!

PANEL 8.5 - SAME

The Man stands up suddenly.

MAN

I don't know who I am! I don't
know who I am! Oh God!

PANEL 8.6 - SAME

The Man starts pacing. It begins to rain harder.

MAN

Oh God! What am I supposed to do!?

PAGE 09 (5 PANELS):

PANEL 9.1 - EXT. - NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

The Man looks up into the sky and reaches up his arms. His hand is still holding the wallet. The picture of the beautiful young lady has started slipping. It's now pouring rain.

MAN

Why, God? What did I do to deserve
this?

PANEL 9.2 - SAME

Still looking up to the sky, the picture falls out of the wallet and onto the Man's face.

PANEL 9.3 - SAME

The Man flips the picture over to see the inscription:

INSCRIPTION

My Dearest James,
I will always love you.
Yours Forever,
Jessica

PANEL 9.4 - SAME

The Man puts the picture back in the wallet and takes out the license.

MAN

That's right. I'm James Parker.
It says so right here. And it says
where I live. 792 16th Street.
That's got to be around here
somewhere, right?

PANEL 9.5 - SAME

With renewed vigor, the Man turns around and runs to the nearest street sign. It reads:

STREET SIGN 1

16th Street

STREET SIGN 2

S Street

MAN

I'm already on 16th Street! This
is wonderful!

PAGE 10 (6 PANELS):

PANEL 10.1 - EXT. - NEW YORK STREET - NIGHT

The Man runs over to the nearest building he can find to look at its address number.

ADDRESS

405

PANEL 10.2 - SAME

The Man runs to the next house (headed back in the direction he came from) to look at its number.

ADDRESS

409

MAN

Going in the right direction.

PANEL 10.3 - SAME

The Man continues running down the street, drawing closer to the Hobo and the police and ambulance.

PANEL 10.4 - SAME

As the Man runs past the Hobo, the Hobo yells out, but the Man interrupts him and just keeps running. He's focusing his attention forward, not on the Hobo.

HOBO

I thought I...

MAN

Aww, same to you pal!

PANEL 10.5 - SAME

As we get much closer to the police and ambulance (whose red and blue lights are still flashing) the Man stops to get his bearings, looking at another address.

ADDRESS

703

PANEL 10.6 - SAME

The Man rushes across the street.

PAGE 11 (5 PANELS):

PANEL 11.1 - EXT. - NEW YORK RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Continuing to draw quite close to the police, the Man stops and looks at the address on this side of the street.

ADDRESS

784

PANEL 11.2 - SAME

The Man pulls out the license and holds it up next to the address of the next building.

LICENSE
James Parker
792 16th Street
New York, NY 10457

ADDRESS
788

PANEL 11.3 - SAME

The Man takes a moment to look at the next building (whose address is 792) but it has been blocked off by yellow police tape. An officer begins to approach.

ADDRESS
792

OFFICER
Excuse me, Sir.

MAN
That's my house! I'm James Parker,
that's my house!

OFFICER
Excuse me?

PANEL 11.4 - INT. - NEW YORK RESIDENCE - NIGHT

The Man pops his head inside the open door which leads into a living room. There has clearly been a violent conflict inside the house. Furniture is upturned. Pictures have fallen off the walls. There are blood stains on the carpet. And two white chalk outlines. The Officer is physically preventing the Man from breaking through the police tape.

OFFICER
Sir, you cannot be here. This is a
crime scene.

MAN
What? A crime scene? That doesn't
make sense.

PANEL 11.5 - EXT. - NEW YORK RESIDENCE - NIGHT

The Man now turns away from the building into the street to finally get a good look at what the police car and ambulance have been doing here. There are two bodies on stretchers in black bags being carted into the back of the ambulance. Only one of their faces is visible - and it's Jessica's.

MAN

Oh no!

OFFICER

Sir - I'm sorry - but you cannot be here.

MAN

But this is my house!

OFFICER

Sir...

What did you say your name was?

PAGE 12 (6 PANELS):

PANEL 12.1 - EXT. - NEW YORK RESIDENCE - NIGHT

The Man hands the Officer his driver's license.

MAN

James Parker. Here's my license.

OFFICER

Sir, James and Jessica Parker are dead.

MAN

But... that's impossible.

PANEL 12.2 - SAME

The Man takes a step towards the body bags, getting a better look at the person we couldn't see before. Clearly, his face is the same as the one on the license (though a few years older.)

MAN

Oh no.

OFFICER

I'm afraid I'm going to have to take you in for questioning.

MAN

No. No no no. This isn't right.

PANEL 12.3 - SAME

The Officer begins to guide the Man towards the police car as another Officer opens the car door.

MAN

I... I didn't do this! I COULDN'T have done this! This doesn't make any sense! Damn it - what's going on!?

PANEL 12.4 - SAME

The Man's head is forced to look downward as the Officer pushes his head down and into the police car. Now we finally see the face of the Man in the reflection of the window of the open car door. He is not well kempt. He hasn't shaved or gotten a haircut in a long time. And he is definitely not James Parker.

[I want this panel to be at an awkward angle, trying to capture the feeling of someone else forcing you into a car that you don't want to get into.]

PANEL 12.5 - INT. - POLICE CAR - NIGHT

The Man slumps down in the back of the car and slowly closes his eyes. This panel will be surrounded by the same black outline as Panel 1.1, only visible through two half-closed eyes.

MAN

Oh God. What have I done?

PANEL 12.6 - SAME.

A completely black panel.

MAN

What have I done?