



## M2K Special Edition Cyberback

Collecting Avengers Immortal #0-8 by Eric Farnberg and CW Rusette



# Table of Contents

Venom #0 by Eric Faynberg .....	3
Venom #1 by Eric Faynberg .....	9
Venom #2 by Eric Faynberg .....	16
Venom #3 by Eric Faynberg .....	24
Venom #4 by Eric Faynberg .....	37
Venom #5 by Eric Faynberg .....	48
Venom #6 by Eric Faynberg .....	61
Venom #7 by Eric Faynberg & CW Russette .....	77
Venom #8 by Eric Faynberg & CW Russette .....	87

MARVEL 2000 PRESENTS

# VENOM

#0

Written by Eric Faynberg

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**Sub-Level 3: Detention Center/Psychiatric Analysis**  
**U.S. Superhuman Affairs Compound, Codename: Alamo**  
**Somewhere in Texas**

**Several months ago...**

The conference room's doors swung open as two men, both dressed in black suits with black sunglasses, entered the room. They were dressed...well. Not nice enough to be Italian mobsters or high-priced lawyers, but too nice to be blue-collar guys in their "good" suits. They were somewhere in the middle. Each man carried several manila file folders. As they made their way to the center of the room, a red-haired woman in a white lab coat approached them.

"Hello, my name is Dr. Gerald. I am the chief psychoanalyst here at Alamo. You must be Mr. Bradley...and you must be Mr. Davis?" the woman asked, with a polite and professional smile.

Bradley looked at her sternly, and took off his sunglasses. "Agents...Bradley and Davis. CIA. I'm from the Superhuman division, and Agent Davis is from the Extraterrestrial division."

"Ah...yes, my mistake. Agents," Dr. Gerald replied. "So what exactly brings you here to Alamo, and what is it I can do for you?"

The two men sat down at the conference table situated in the center of the large room. Both quickly glanced at their files and turned towards the doctor, who had sat down across from them.

"Ms. Gerald..."

"Dr. Gerald," the woman interrupted.

Bradley looked at her, again sternly. "Dr. Gerald, we understand that you have been working closely with one of the prisoners..."

"Patients," Dr. Gerald interrupted.

Agent Bradley cleared his throat. "Yes...patients, excuse me. We understand you have been working with this particular patient for over a year now, ever since he was transferred here."

“I work with several patients, Agent Bradley. You will have to be more specific,” Dr. Gerald said as she poured herself a glass of water from the pitcher in the middle of the table.

“Yes, I see you work with several, how shall I put it, ‘high-profile’ superhuman patients,” Bradley said as he looked over another file. “We are here, however, because of one patient specifically.”

“We are here to discuss Eddie Brock...Venom,” Agent Davis blurted out, with an almost hidden sense of urgency and excitement.

Dr. Gerald almost dropped her glass as she heard the words escape Davis’ mouth. “Mr. Brock...yes I have indeed been working with him for sometime.”

“We understand that Mr. Brock’s condition has vastly improved. We were informed that Mr. Brock has been...cured, that he is ready to be removed from the government’s custody and placed back into society. Is this assessment correct, Dr. Gerald?” Agent Davis asked.

“No, no that is not correct at all!” Dr. Gerald exclaimed, slamming her hand on the table. “While Mr. Brock has made SIGNIFICANT improvements with his mental and emotional issues, he is by no means ready to re-enter society. And another thing! He is most certainly not...cured. Far from it!” Dr. Gerald caught her breath as she ended her rant, a rant that slightly startled both men.

Agent Bradley adjusted his tie, and again cleared his throat. “Well how exactly has he improved, Dr. Gerald?”

She too cleared her throat, and took a drink of water before answering the man’s question. “The most significant improvement Mr. Brock has made is that he truly, at least in my professional opinion, no longer wants to be part of the symbiotic relationship which has caused him to end up in this facility. Considering my track record in this field, I believe my opinion is of some value.”

“Why do you think he is being truthful? Can’t it be he is just lying?” Agent Bradley asked her.

She felt a slight sarcastic tone in his voice, but she tossed the thought aside to answer his question. “There are many reasons, and not just the psychoanalysis of his behavior. There are also obvious signs. For a long time, Mr. Brock would refer to himself as ‘we’, signifying the symbiotic entity with which he is bonded. This has gradually stopped. He no longer calls himself ‘we’, nor does he ever ask to be reunited with his ‘other’ or his ‘better half’. Earlier, he would make such references and demands constantly. Even simple observation of how he behaves himself in his holding cell would show that he has indeed conquered many of his inner demons, but that doesn’t mean he is ready to be re-entered into society. Not by a long shot.”

Agent Bradley stared at the doctor for a moment, seemingly examining her face. “Yes, your opinion is surely valued. So you truly believe that Mr. Brock has no desire to continue a symbiotic relationship with his, as he calls it ‘other’?”

“I am quite confident of that, Agent Bradley,” Dr. Gerald responded.

“Would you be so kind as to excuse us for a moment, Dr. Gerald, while we discuss something?” Agent Davis asked her.

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Dr. Gerald again sensed a slight urgency in his voice. She wondered why. “Yes, of course. I’ll wait outside.” She left the room as the two men quietly discussed amongst themselves.

Several minutes had passed since she’d been asked to leave the room, and Dr. Gerald paced uneasily in the hall outside the conference room. She didn’t like that these two men were hearing interrogating her about Brock. She knew he was certainly not ready to be released from her care. She was proud of herself, and him, for the strides they had made in his recovery. But he was certainly not at the finish line. She felt sorry for Brock. When she had encountered him for the first time, he was still in some sort of special chamber even though he had been separated from his symbiote. He was a vile and disgusting man when she first saw him, totally insane and bursting with evil. Her first sessions with him convinced her that he was nothing but a crazed murderer, a psychopath with an insatiable lust for killing.

Overtime, however, her work with him had led her to believe that there was something more to him than just death and insanity. He was no prince charming, but somewhere underneath the evil was a more or less normal man, and that man was dying with every passing day.

She pledged more time to work with Brock, more than with her other patients. She was sure that the longer Brock was mentally attached to his symbiote, the less chance there would ever be for him to regain any semblance of sanity.

It paid off. She began to see major improvements in Brock. He talked less and less like a crazed lunatic, but more like an imprisoned criminal. Hey, it was better than the former. He no longer paced around his containment cell, shouting things at all hours of the night. He no longer screamed demands to be reunited with his symbiote, nor did he rant on and on about protecting innocents and destroying Spiderman’s life.

Eventually he began to regain hope of living a normal life. He often spent his time daydreaming about a normal life. She hoped one day he’d have a normal life again, but she knew there was still a lot of work to be done. One doesn’t go from being a psychopathic super villain to a normal everyman in the span of a just over a year. She had worked with enough superpowered scumbags to know that.

At this particular moment, what worried her most about Brock’s future were the two men in the conference room and whatever it was that they were discussing.

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Agent Bradley called her back into the room, and she sat back across the table from them. Bradley looked at her, trying to broach whatever subject was on his mind in the fashion he thought she would least object to. “Dr. Gerald, according to your description of Mr. Brock’s well-being, the United States government is led to believe that Mr. Brock is indeed well enough to rejoin society.”

Dr. Gerald was appalled. “What? No! No! I only told you that he was GETTING better. I just said he was not ready!”

“Nevertheless,” Agent Bradley quickly retorted, “we believe otherwise, and we have the discretion of the government to make good with that belief. However, we do need your medical diagnosis and expert opinion in writing which does indeed state that Mr. Brock is fully sane, and ready to be released from government custody.”

“NO! Not a chance in hell! I won’t do it. It goes against everything I believe in, everything I stand for,” Dr. Gerald yelled.

Bradley put his elbows on the table and leaned forward, sporting an intimidating sneer. “Ms. Gerald, despite your excellent track record, please do not assume that you have 100% job security. Nothing will ever garner you that privilege with the United States government, no matter how good at your job you are. Do you understand what I am saying, MS. Gerald?”

Dr. Gerald’s spirits sagged. She was disgusted. “Yes, yes I understand. But I won’t do it unless you tell me why you want this. I don’t care if you do fire me, but let me tell you that bringing them my recommendation is worth just a bit more than most people in my field, I will tell you that much!”

The two agents glanced at each other briefly, and then Agent Davis turned to Dr. Gerald. “The government is very interested in working with symbiotic life forms, and we feel Mr. Brock would be an excellent form of research into this. We are confident that he won’t do it if we just ask him, but we are prepared to offer him his freedom for this service. Think of it as him repaying his debt to society.”

“Bull shit,” Dr. Gerald sighed, and leaned back into her chair. “Fine, I guess I have no choice do I? Give me the damn papers. I hope you’re happy. He’s not ready! He can easily go back to his old ways, and then the blood of many will be on your hands. You’ll regret this. Trust me.”

“Just sign the paper, Dr. Gerald,” Davis said, with a sly little smirk on his face.

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The guard buzzed them in, and Dr. Gerald thanked him as she lead the two government agents into the detention center towards the isolated holding cell of Edward Brock. As they approached his cell, she pressed a button to the side of the large door. The door opened and revealed a small room with a bed, a toilet, and a sink. One wall was made of some sort of specially reinforced

glass, so that Brock could see and speak with someone on the other side. Dr. Gerald turned on the intercom.

“Mr. Brock, please wake up.”

The covers on the bed slowly shuffled, and the body lying there slowly sat up. Eddie Brock slowly got out of his bed, ruffling his dirty blonde hair.

“Good morning, Mr. Brock. How did you sleep?” Dr. Gerald asked Brock, kindly.

“Good morning, Dr. Gerald,” Brock replied. “I slept well, thank you.”

“Good, good. I’m glad, Mr. Brock...Mr. Brock, this is Agent Bradley and Agent Davis. They are from the CIA, and they are here to discuss something with you,” Dr. Gerald stated.

“Alright, I guess...” Brock answered, pulling on his sweatpant-esque detention attire.

“Good. I will leave you with them, then, Mr. Brock,” Dr. Gerald said, turning to leave. “Oh, and Mr. Brock...Edward, I’m sorry.”

“For what?” Brock asked her, but she didn’t respond, already half way down the hall.

Agent Bradley took off his sunglasses. “Mr. Brock...we have a little proposition for you.”

“I see. Well, I’m listening...”

“Mr. Brock, I am going to be as frank with you as I can be,” Agent Bradley said to Brock. “Seeing as how you are a more-or-less reformed man, I feel I can be truthful with you. The government is VERY interested in exploring the opportunities that symbiote presents. However, even our space and science research programs have limitations. We can only go so far. You however, present an interesting opportunity yourself. With your unprecedented ‘experience’ with the substance, you would be a very helpful partner in our research, Mr. Brock,” Bradley finished, hoping for a suitable response.”

“I don’t think that’s a very good idea. I am no longer the host of the symbiote, and I never want to be again. I want to get better, nor do I have a desire to help you bastards exploit the symbiote and create another Venom,” Brock said, standing up and staring a hole through the agents.

“We anticipated your lack of enthusiasm, Mr. Brock. That’s why we are willing to do something for you if you agree to do this for us. You scratch our back, we’ll scratch yours,” Agent Davis explained. “In exchange for your help, we are willing to give you the one thing you desire most. Freedom,” Davis continued. “A clean bill of mental health and a release from government custody, Mr. Brock. We feel that this offer is more than fair,” Davis added as Brock contemplated.

“I see,” Brock said, full of thought. “And how do I know that I can trust you? How can I be sure that once you’re done with me, you won’t just throw me back in jail?”

“I can appreciate your concern, Mr. Brock. I don’t know if there is anyway to prove to you that we will release you upon the project’s completion, I suppose you will have to take our word,” Bradley answered, trying to sound as sincere as possible. “The only thing I can tell you that may appease your mistrust, Mr. Brock, is that we have it in writing from Dr. Gerald that you are medically ready to be reinserted into society. Now, why would we do that if we had no intention of releasing you. Some of our superiors will only green light this project if it is done by the book, which means we are forced to honor our word to you, Mr. Brock.”

Brock came up to the glass as close as possible, looking right into Bradley’s eyes. “I’m sorry, sir. Regardless of that, I’m afraid I just don’t trust you.”

“Before you make up your mind for good, let me also make one other point clear to you. This may be the only chance you have. There is no guarantee that you will ever be released on your own merit, Mr. Brock. And if you turn us down now, let me assure you that circumstances will dictate that your chances at that will become even less likely. Do you understand what I’m telling you, Mr. Brock?”

Brock snorted, with a sarcastic smirk on his face. “Yea, I got you. If I don’t do this, I’ll never get out of here, and if I do, I still might not. I’m fucked if I do, fucked if I don’t.”

Bradley, seemingly tired of this discussion, responded quickly. “Mr. Brock, again, regardless of my thoughts on the matter, my superiors for some reason demand that this be done by the book. You will have your release if you do this ‘favor’ for us. Now...what’s it going to be Mr. Brock? Are you in or are you out?”

“I can’t really say no, can I?” Brock sighed.

Agent Bradley put his sunglasses back on with a big smile on his face. “No, I suppose not. Well then, let’s get this paperwork taken care of.”

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## A TASTE OF VENOM

NEXT ISSUE: Eddie Brock is a free man once again, and he is also a new man. Will Eddie Brock be able to build a new life for himself, or will his inner demons return and cause him to revert to his former, troubled self?

Find out as a new chapter in Brock’s life begins in the explosive Venom #1!



MARVEL 2000 PRESENTS

# VENOM

#1

Written by Eric Faynberg

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Several months ago, Eddie Brock agreed to participate in secret government testing on human-alien symbiotic relations in exchange for his freedom from a top secret government psychiatric detention center. Now, this testing had finally come to an end. Eddie Brock was free to go. He'd been apprehensive towards the two government agents with whom he'd been dealing with. He was sure Bradley and Davis would screw him over, but so far they had not.

So here he was, on a government mini-jet, flying from Texas to a private airstrip somewhere in New York. He sat across from Agent Bradley, both men sitting quietly observing each other. Several government guards patrolled inside the small jet. Brock was getting antsy. He still wasn't sure what was going to happen next. It had been the first time in around 2 years that he had seen the light of day. While he was glad to be out of Alamo, he was nervous beyond belief.

At least he was finally away from the symbiote. He had spent so long repairing his damaged psyche, and then was forced to be reunited with the symbiote that had destroyed him as per the bargain he had worked out with Agent Bradley. Thankfully, he was able to fight off its effects and still had no desire to be with it. He was a normal man again, and he couldn't wait to renew his life.

He couldn't take the silence anymore. "Where exactly are we going?" he asked.

Bradley, looked at him, seemingly annoyed. "I can't disclose the exact location to you. I already told you that eventually you'll end up in New York."

"Why New York?" Brock asked.

"Well, Brock, as fun as it would have been to drop you off in the middle of the desert under the hot Texas sun, as I've told you millions of times, my superiors are forcing me to go by the book with you. As far as New York...well this is where you are from, isn't it? Where else are you going to go?"

"I suppose you are right. I've got nowhere else to go...hey, where's Davis?" Brock wondered aloud.

"Agent Davis is no longer burdened by you, Brock. His involvement ended when you finished the testing. He is from the Extraterrestrial division. He gets to stay in Alamo and play with his

new toy. I have to deal with you, although that will be over soon. Thankfully." Davis said, expressing a sigh of relief.

"Sorry to be such a burden...anyway...what the hell is going to happen to me?" Brock blurted out.

Bradley stared at him for a moment, and then reached over to the seat next to him and grabbed a suitcase.

"What's in there?" Brock wondered.

"Wait a moment, and find out." Bradley answered, clearly annoyed. "As I said before, sadly we have to do this by the book and that means we have to set you up somehow, not just throw you out on your ass."

"Well that's nice of you."

"Yes, indeed it is. First of all Brock, people know who you are. They know what you've done. That means you haven't got a shot as Eddie Brock."

"What are you saying?" Brock asked, confused.

"I'm saying you need a new identity. A new name for a new life. We've given you that. We've given you a new identity. All the documents are here," Bradley said looking through the briefcase. He giggled a bit, suddenly.

"What's so funny?"

"Some computer geek, whoever was working on this, thought it'd be funny. Guess it is, kinda."

"What?"

"Well, your new name is Brock Edwards. Hahahaha. That is funny," Bradley said, laughing some more.

"Meh...could be worse," Brock replied.

"Heh...moving on. You have all the necessary documents. Drivers license, birth certificate, passport, social security card, and diplomas. Hmm, not bad. Bachelor's in journalism from Rutgers. Bet that's better than what you had before, isn't it?"

"Shut up," Brock sulked.

"Yea, so all the papers you need are here. As well as some cash. You will need some to survive for a while, until you get yourself a job. \$15,000 will suffice, won't it?"

Brock jumped out of his seat, just a bit. "Of course! That's great. Man...I'm a former murderer

and the government is just giving me these things..."

"The government works in mysterious ways, doesn't it?" Bradley responded. "Anyway, that about covers it. The rest is up to you. Get a job, don't get a job. Turn your life around, rot to hell on a street corner. Doesn't matter to me. Just do the suits a favor and don't start ripping people's heads out and eating their brains, alright?"

"You got it. You can count on me."

"Right... We'll be landing soon, so fasten your seatbelt."

"What happens after we land?" Brock asked.

"The limo takes you to Manhattan, and that's about it. You're on your own from there. Don't fuck up."

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The limo dropped off Eddie Brock, or Brock Edwards as he would now go by, right in the middle of Times Square. He knew Manhattan Island, and all of New York City well after living there for so many years. He quickly made his way to a bank he remembered on 29th and Lexington. He had once had an account there. He enjoyed the 13-block walk. He had loved this city once, and now he remembered why. As he stepped into the main branch of the Unity Bank, he took in that fresh air-conditioned air that always flows through banks. He felt alive and well. He missed little things like this. He approached the counters and got on line for a teller. The teller was a cute, ditsy little thing. A brunette, just out of college most likely. He noticed her nametag, which said 'Becky'. He approached the counter when it was his turn, and felt a little nervous. This was his first venture into his new life, but then a feeling of confidence overwhelmed him. *Time to be the man I once was, even if I have a new name now*, he thought to himself.

"Hello, Becky. How are you today?" Brock began, with a big smile on his face.

"Um, like, how did you know my name?" Becky asked, a bit scarred.

Brock's smile turned to an apologetic frown. "It says on your name tag."

Becky quickly brightened up again. "Oh, yeah. I like, forgot about that. So um, what can I do for you?"

"I'd like to open an account," Brock said, flashing her another charming smile. He wasn't sure, but he thought he saw Becky's cheeks redden just a bit.

"Ok, let me just punch up this form here. Ok, what's your name, sir?"

"Ed... Brock Edwards. Brock Edwards is my name." Brock stumbled, slightly.

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Brock and Becky finished out filling the information on the form and then Brock took some of the cash he had in the briefcase and entered it into the account, and put the rest away in a safe deposit box in the bank's safe, keeping a few hundred on him. Afterwards, he stopped by Becky's counter again, before leaving.

"Thanks for all your help Becky, I really appreciate it."

"Just doing my job and all," Becky smiled at him.

Brock smiled his smile again. "Next time, I'll make sure I get on your counter's line," Brock said, turning his back to walk away.

This time, he was sure she blushed.

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He got some change at a drug store and bought himself some black hair dye. He figured if he was gonna change his name, he might as well change his appearance. He decided he'd grow his hair out too, longer than the mullet-type 'do' he'd once had. Brock spent a bit more time walking around Manhattan, but as night grew closer, he realized that he'd better find a place to spend the night. He didn't want to waste the money he had on an expensive hotel room, but then he got an idea. He hitched a cab and pointed him toward the Lincoln Tunnel.

He had remembered a small little inn he had once had a drunken one-night stand in after a Giants game right by the Meadowlands Sports Complex in East Rutherford, New Jersey. 15 minute drive to and from Manhattan, less with no traffic. The cab let him out not too far from Giants Stadium, and Brock explored for a few minutes until he found the inn he was looking for. The Giant Devil motel. *Very original name*, he concurred. Luckily, they had two empty rooms. Brock took one of them, and bid the clerk at the office a good night.

He walked to his room and opened the door. A rundown room, along with a small bathroom greeted him. The walls were poorly wallpapered; the bed was old and worn out. An old 20-inch TV stood on the counter. Brock headed toward the shower, where he washed in the black hair dye. A few minutes later, a clean and relaxed Brock layed down in the old motel room bed. Many people would be disgusted at the thought of spending the night in a rundown, seedy motel like this. On this night, however, the man once known as Eddie Brock couldn't care less if he wanted to. After the day he had, he was on cloud 9. Tomorrow, he was confident that it would only get better.

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It was a bright new day, and the man now known as Brock Edwards felt like a new man. He was refreshed after a long night's sleep. He walked over to the motel room sink and looked up in the mirror. He was startled at first, but then remembered washing in the black into his hair the night

before. *It didn't look so bad*, he thought to himself, although he preferred his natural blonde. Brock hopped into the shower and a few minutes later, he was getting dressed. He only had what he was wearing the day before, when he had left Alamo. He needed to head into Manhattan again and buy some clothes. He needed a suit if he was going to get a job.

Soon enough, Brock was out the door. He walked the 15 minutes to Giants Stadium and took the NJ Transit bus to the Port Authority in Manhattan. Arriving at the terminal at 11:30 AM, Brock estimated he would be able to get all of his errands done and be prepared to look for a job by the next day. He took a few escalators up - and then down again, as he recalled the structure of the large transportation terminal. Soon enough he found the nearest subway station, and he bought himself a Metrocard and in minutes was on the 2 train.

It wasn't the packed subway cars he was used to taking during rush hour back in the day when he worked for the Bugle, but riding that subway car brought back so many fond memories of the simple life he used to live. The wonderful feeling he had to be a New Yorker, going through the daily hustle and bustle to get to and from work. The elderly oriental woman selling batteries for a dollar, the hobo asking for change and even the usual faint aroma of urine that wafted around the 2 train. It was all like reliving a dream for Brock.

Snapping back to reality, Brock realized he was about to miss his stop. He rushed out of the subway car onto the Christopher St. platform. Taking the stairs up, Brock emerged in the middle of New York's most diverse neighborhood. The Village was home to all sorts of weirdoes and whack-O's. All sorts of people populated the Village. Lots of people living 'alternative lifestyles'. Brock wasn't exactly one of them, but he knew that the Village was a fun place to hang out, and that there was always something going on. Greenwich Village also had a number of great stores, and on this day, that is exactly why Brock was there.

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Brock spent the rest of the day buying clothes and other necessities, as well as re-introducing himself to some other places in Manhattan that he'd missed. He stopped by Madison Square Garden and recalled many of his favorite sports memories. He strolled to the Empire State Building, taking in its magnificence, though not going inside. He went downtown and ate a sandwich in Battery Park, overlooking the Hudson River. He had always loved that park. He thought about going over to see the site of the Twin Towers, but decided against it. He would go, but not today. He was in too good of a mood on this day to go there. After the park, he continued on his errands.

By the time he was finished, it was dark already. He was hungry and decided to have a small meal before taking a cab back to the motel. He found a coffee shop on the Lower East Side, Tom's Coffee Corner. The place was near empty, with one waitress working, one man sitting at the counter, and a young couple sitting at a both in the corner of the coffee shop. He took a seat at one end of the counter and ordered a cup of decaf, and a ham and cheese omelet. Live a little, he joked to himself. In 5 minutes, he was looking down at a delicious looking omelet. It indeed was delicious, as he swallowed the first bite and took a sip of his coffee. Before he could take another bite, the man sitting at the other end of the counter interrupted him.

"Got a light?" asked the middle-aged man.

"Sorry, pal. I don't smoke."

"Oh yeah? Wow, a non-smoking New Yorker. You're a rare breed, you know," the man said, matter-o-factly.

"Well, I am real self-conscious about my health. I'm a workout fiend. I hope it shows, or I wouldn't be much of a workout fiend then," Brock said, jokingly.

"Yea, you look like a fella who can handle yourself. But from the looks of that omelet, you don't care THAT much about your health," the man chuckled.

"Well, I haven't had a chance to indulge myself in a while."

"How come, friend?"

"First time on my own in a while, I guess."

"Oh, I see. Just get divorced?" the man asked.

"Yeah...divorce...something like that," Brock mumbled.

The man moved over a few stools closer to Brock and stuck his hand out.

"Name's Tom McGeery. I own this here coffee shop," Tom stated, proudly.

"Really? Well, you run a fine establishment. Fine cook, too. This omelet is mouthwatering," Brock complimented.

"So, you from around here?" Tom asked.

"My name is Brock. Brock Edwards, and yeah, I am. I just haven't been home in a while."

"I see," said Tom, examining Brock's face. "Just get back to town?"

"Yea. Don't even have a place to live yet. I'm staying in a motel out in Jersey."

"Yikes...say, you lookin' for an apartment?"

"Hell yeah! I don't have a job yet, but I have a decent amount of cash to live off of till I find one. Why, you know a place?" Brock asked, excitedly.

"Just so happens that I own this building, and we have apartments up stairs, and one just opened up a few days ago. I hadn't even placed an ad in the papers for it yet. Would you like to take a look at it?"

"You bet your ass I would," Brock exclaimed, a big grin spreading quickly along his face.

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The neon sign of the Giant Devil Motel glared into the room through the shabbily made curtains. The room had a noticeable white glow to it, but Brock Edwards had been asleep for several minutes, as soon as his head hit the pillow. It had been a long day, and he was tired. Tired, but content. Happy, even. He had found an apartment in just his second day of freedom. How cool was that? *How lucky am I*, Brock thought to himself as he drifted off to sleep. Tomorrow he would move into the Lower East Side studio apartment, and look for a job. Things were finally looking up for Brock. He hadn't been happier in years.

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The body in the room had been motionless in slumber for about an hour when the white glow of the room suddenly became red. Oddly shaped shadows danced along the red-tinted walls, but the body of Eddie Brock/Brock Edwards remained unconscious. In a few minutes the room's eerie red glow disappeared, reverting to the previous white glare of the neon sign outside. Minutes later, a blood-curling scream filled the night air just a few blocks away. In a small house at 126 Greentree Lane, a couple lay in their beds, dead, the walls of the room drenched in red. Most of the red was the blood of Martin and Janice Trelor, a thirty-something couple that had just months before bought their first home in the hopes of starting a family in the New Jersey suburbs. Some of the red that drenched the walls of their bedroom, however, was not their blood. It was...something else. And whatever it was...much like the blood it was spilled beside, it too had once been alive...

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## A TASTE OF VENOM

**NEXT ISSUE:** Everything upon everything just seems to be going right for Eddie Brock/Brock Edwards. Will his lucky streak continue? What does the murder of a young couple from the suburbs have to do with him?

Find out in Venom #2!!!

MARVEL 2000 PRESENTS

# VENOM

#2

Written by Eric Faynberg

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"Ladies and gentlemen, the winner and NNNNNNNNNNEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEWWWWWWW ALL-STAR WRESTLING CHAMPION....'THE MILLENIUM MAN' MARK MATTHEWS!!!!"

The Madison Square Garden capacity crowd was roaring with approval, as 18,000 wrestling fans cheered on their new champion. As the winner, Mark Matthews, posed for the crowd, his defeated opponent rolled out of the ring and trudged slowly to the backstage area. He turned to look at the fans who once cheered him on, now cheering a younger and stronger man on.

"The Idol" Ian Johnson, as he was known, had been the premier professional wrestler for years. Wrestling had made him a bona fide star, a celebrity. He was in movies and TV shows. He had plenty of endorsements. The last few years, however, had been a different story. He was getting up there in age, now in his late 30s, and he had suffered several serious injuries that severely hampered his athletic ability.

As he walked into the locker room, he remembered the day several months ago when the owner of the company, Stan Rockman, had called him into his office for "the talk" that he had been waiting for ever since his most recent serious injury. Sure enough, Rockman explained to him that the company was going to begin shifting the spotlight off of him and onto some of the younger athletes in the company. The fans were getting a little tired of the same people to cheer and boo, and it was time to give them something new.

'I took it like a man,' he thought to himself, as he fished out his cellular phone from his duffel bag. He was glad tonight's show was in Manhattan, where he lived in his free time with his wife. He knew if anyone could cheer him up from the depressing state he was in now, it was his wife, who was waiting for him at their Midtown apartment. Yeah, he had no problems in the financial department.

"Hey honey," he said, as she answered the phone.

"Hi sweetie. The match is over?" she asked him.

"Yep...why didn't you watch?"

"You know I don't like watching the matches when you lose, Ian."



"Yeah, I know baby," Johnson said, smiling slightly to himself. "I guess I'm headed home now. No reason to stay around the arena."

"Mmm, sounds good. I've got a sexy surprise for you, so don't take too long."

"I won't, I'll just pick up something to eat on my way. What do you want? Chinese?"

"Sure, that would be fine. I'll see you..."

Before she could finish her thought, the call disconnected.

"Stupid piece of shit," Johnson scoffed at the phone. It had been giving him trouble recently. He decided to try and get his mind away from negative thoughts. 'Think positive,' he told himself. Just what kind of sexy surprise was in store for him when he got home?

---

"Not much in the way of worldly possessions with you, is there Brock?"

"Nope, not much at all Tom. I'm startin' from scratch, I guess you would say."

In the living room of his new apartment above Tom's Coffee Shop, Brock Edwards was in awe. Standing with his new landlord and friend, he was in awe of the tiny little Manhattan apartment. It needed paint. New floors would have been nice. Kitchen tiles needed to be changed, too. Brock Edwards, however, was in awe. This place was his. He now lived here. On the Lower East side. A short walk from the East Village, and just far enough away from Alphabet City where he wouldn't have to worry. How could he be so lucky that he was getting a second chance at life like this?

"You know," Tom began, turning to Brock, "I can bring up some old furniture that I have sitting the storage room for you, till you get yourself a job."

"Aw, no, that's way too much to ask of you, Tom."

"Nah, really. It's no problem at all. After all, I ain't usin' it anyway. It's just sittin' down there, collectin' dust."

"...All right, then. I'll go down there with you a little later and carry it up. I'll pay you back, though. You'll see. Once I get a job, I'll put some money into this place, fix it up a bit."

"Whatever you want, Brock. It's your place now. Well, it's your place for as long as you can pay the rent," Tom joked.

"Oh yeah, I'll fix this place up a bit. Say, if you ever need a hand around the shop or the building in general, I can help you out. I used to be pretty good with my hands, back in the day. I'm sure I could help you out with something," Brock mentioned.

"Calm down, Brock. What kind of landlord demands favors of his tenants? Listen, if you can do something once in a while around here when I need a hand, that'd be fine. Just don't start linin' up to do everythin' around here. That's my job, anyway."

"I can't help it, Tom. I'm just so damn grateful. Back in town only a day and lucky enough to stumble upon a great apartment and a great guy like yourself. I really appreciate it, pal."

"Not a prob, Brock. Thanks for the compliment, though. I am a pretty great guy, aren't I?" Tom said, with a small smile.

"Haha! Yeah, you're a regular Bobby De Niro," Brock said, jokingly.

"I wouldn't go that far. Anyway, let's go downstairs and move some of that old furniture up here. I got an ugly couch down there with your name all over it," Tom said.

"Sounds good to me, man. Sounds good to me."

---

The aroma of the latest Chanel women's fragrance hit him lightly as he stepped into the apartment. The doorman had informed him that Stella, his wife, had been especially beautiful when she had come home that night. He smiled to himself. A night like this was exactly what he needed to get his career off of his mind. One of the TVs was on somewhere in the apartment. He set the Chinese food he had gotten on his way home down in the dining room, and went over to the wall-length window overlooking the Avenue of The Americas. The city that never slept was, as usual, bustling even at this hour. He wouldn't be getting much sleep himself that night, he thought to himself, as he took off his coat and shoes. He looked out the window, and then back at his apartment, and then ultimately about his beautiful wife. It was all great...but he couldn't help but feel depressed deep down, at least partially, that he wasn't good enough to be the star anymore.

'Stop it!' he yelled at himself internally. 'Go and enjoy a night with your wife, you fool. Think about everything else later,' he thought, and he made his way toward the bedroom.

---

"Couple of cups of coffee please, Irene."

"You got it, boss."

"Good woman, that Irene. Been here for a long, long time. You'll like her," Tom McGeery explained to his new tenant and friend.

Brock Edwards just nodded, still taking in the fact that he'd be living atop this little coffee shop. He'd just finished carrying up some of Tom's old furniture to his apartment from the building's storage room. Now, over a cup of coffee, it was time to do something about the last major

element of life that he hadn't been lucky enough to yet secure in these incredible couple of days. Time to find a job.

As Irene brought Tom and him some coffee, he opened the New York Post and turned to the classifieds. Several minutes of looking through the pages of the classified section confirmed Brock's original sentiments: He was better off just going down to the offices of some papers and asking them in person for a job. The classifieds were bull. He needed to take the initiative. After all, taking the initiative was what good journalism and good reporting was all about.

---

Walking down the halls of his beautiful Manhattan high rise apartment, he slowly made his way toward the master bedroom. A bottle of chilled white wine in one hand, he opened the door with the other hand. The room had obviously been prepared for a romantic romp. The occasional rose petal casually thrown on the bed or floor, the dimmed lights, and the jazz playing on the stereo. The only thing Johnson didn't see was the woman. A small stain on the carpet caught his eye. He bent down to look at it. In his business, it didn't take him long to recognize dried blood. He swiftly stood up, and scanned the floor for more such stains, and found several leading to the bedroom's half-bath. He lunged at the door, and opened it so hard it almost came off the hinges.

He probably wasn't as surprised as he should have been. The dried blood on the carpet took some of that aspect away. He half-expected to see the sight that was now plaguing his eyes. He felt as if his corneas were burning, but those were just the hot tears that had begun to slowly slide down his face. It had hit him right in the face but he had seen it before he even turned the knob.

Now he stood there, tears pouring from his eyes. He just stood there...

---

On West 33rd street in Manhattan , Brock Edwards stood inside the office of the Daily News' EiC.

"I'm sorry pal, but there's no way. You gotta be friggin' nuts if you think I'm gonna hire you. Thanks for wastin' my time, buster. Now get the hell outta my office, and don't let the door hit ya where the good lord split ya! I got a paper to run!"

The man mumbled several other statements to himself, his demeanor not changing even well after Brock had left the building.

'Next on the list...the Post,' Brock thought to himself.

---

There she was, like a doll flung without regard at the wall. Propped up awkwardly against the marble tiled wall, her lifeless form sat in a tepid pool of her own blood. His beautiful, picture perfect wife. Stella, his wife. His god damn wife! He'd been standing for several minutes, frozen,

hoping against hope that this was some sort of hallucination. Some kind of sick Shining-esque vision. Finally, when enough tears had fell to the floor beneath him that they started to make splish-splash noises as they fell into the puddle, he returned to reality. The light emanating from their bedroom's large lamp shone directly into the bathroom. He bent down, taking her hand in his. He kissed it, and placed her palm to his cheek and mouth. It's what she would do to him when he was depressed. Give him the reassuring feeling of a warm touch. Sadly, her hand was far from warm. He dropped it, her cold skin making him shiver.

He continued to look at her, his knees bent in a crouch. He gently took her by the head, trying to look into her eyes. Her big beautiful blue eyes. He would look into them and imagine he was staring at two pools of the cleanest, most beautiful bodies of water in the world. Now, he saw nothing. He saw emptiness. He saw despair. He saw his future. He saw death.

She was dead. In his head, he finally said it. She was dead. He dropped her head all of a sudden, her skull hitting the floor with a thud. He began to slowly rise from his crouch and back away from the corpse. He stopped, however, as the bright white light that filled the room from behind him turned to an eerie red glow. He didn't want to turn around, but he did anyway. He saw emptiness, despair. He saw his future. He saw death. Red death.

He tried to scream, but what would be his final expression of free will wouldn't even form in his vocal chords. All that came out of his mouth was a loud gasp. It was all he could muster. He didn't even have the energy or the will to put up a fight. He just saw death. Red death.

---

"You have a lot of potential, Mr. Edwards. I can see you going far in this field. I'm just not sure its going to be as a member of our staff. At least not yet. You need some experience first. However, I really enjoyed speaking with you. I'm gonna tell you this. You go out and get some experience. Go to a smaller paper. Get some real experience. Then come back here. In a year or two. If I'm still in charge here, I just might have something for you."

Brock smiled at the Post's EiC. He appreciated the kind words, but the bottom line was he still didn't have a job. He exchanged goodbyes with the man, and left the New York Post offices.

He decided to take the man's advice, though. He started a new mental checklist.

'Small time papers, but not tabloid trash. Just small time,' he thought to himself. 'I can do that.'

---

The big lamp had fallen in the chaos and commotion, and the room was cast in near-total darkness, aside from the slight red tint emanating from it. An onlooker standing 20 or 30 yards away would see nothing more then the form of an oddly shaped, glowing man apparently having a seizure, or fighting himself or an imaginary opponent in a drunken stupor.

If only that was the case. He'd much prefer being in a drunken stupor compared to the rather unpleasant circumstances he was facing.

He felt like his very soul was being sucked from his body. He was being enveloped, overtaken. He was bouncing off the walls of his apartment, bumping into things, and knocking over anything he neared. Bangs and crashes echoed through the apartment as finally Johnson was sure that he was dying. He dropped to the floor and continued to roll around as if he was having a seizure. Suddenly, he stopped. The overwhelming feeling slowly receded until he began to lose all feeling in his body. He saw nothing except red. Red death.

---

He stood in the office of the owner and editor of The City Crier , a small newspaper situated in Queens . A neighborhood called Sunnyside. It was an interesting name, mainly because Sunnyside was an industrial section of the city, far from what one envisions a place called Sunnyside to be. Then again, that kind of thing held true for lots of people, places, and things all over the city.

Unlike the offices at the Post and Daily News, this was clearly not the most upscale operation. The office was covered with file cabinets, stacks of paper, and an object which appeared to be a desk. It was covered in so much clutter it was almost hard to tell.

The man in charge was a short and stocky balding man. His mustache, as unkempt as his office, was in need of a trim. He paced around the office as Brock sat. As he walked back and forth, the enormous amount of keys that hung from one of the belt loops in his pants banged against each other, producing a rhythmical albeit annoying noise.

Finally, he stopped, looked at Brock, and opened his mouth. He didn't say anything for several seconds, just stood there with his mouth agape. Brock almost turned around, thinking that something was behind him, but the man finally spoke.

"All right, man. I'll give you a shot. You seem like you got a knack for sticking your nose into people's business. That's the trademark of a good reporter, you know."

Brock smiled wide. "Thank you, Mr. Wallace. I really need this," Brock said. It wasn't his old job at the Globe, nor was it the Post, but it was something. Right now, that was enough.

"Yea, so why don't you come by after tomorrow and I'll get you set up. Tomorrow I'll be out all day, so that's no good. I'll see you in two," Wallace said, as if he was trying to hurry Brock out of his office.

Brock took the hint. "Ok, Mr. Wallace. Thank you again. You won't regret it."

"Yea yea, ok pal. See ya later."

---

Mary Leirmann was a struggling actress/waitress. Her good looks, however, had endeared her to a wildly rich lawyer. She lived with him now, in the apartment directly across from the professional wrestler and his wife. She often envied the woman, Stella. She hated Richard, her boyfriend. She was only with him for his money. She didn't try to fool herself. She wished she could be with Ian, the guy across the hall. He was a celebrity, and he was a hunk. She just thought of that as she came home, a little wobbly, after a night out with the girls. Richard was away on business, as usual. As she reached for her door, she heard several extremely loud crashes in the apartment across the hall. Perhaps a bit braver than she would be without the influence of alcohol, she crept into the apartment across the hall. In buildings like this, tenants didn't always lock their doors. Especially on the higher floors like the one they were on, where there were less apartments. The door was unlocked, and she made her way inside.

She'd been inside this apartment only once, when Richard's refrigerator broke and she had asked Stella, who she would engage in polite conversation with from time to time, if she could use her refrigerator so some special culinary items didn't spoil. It was a beautiful apartment, exactly the same shape as Richard's. This one was more modern, and warmer. She liked it more. Yea, damn that Stella. She was a lucky girl.

She made her way through the apartment. She walked into the bedroom, and was taken aback for a moment. The room was destroyed. It was as if a tornado had gone through just the bedroom. As she looked around, she saw the bathroom door open. She stepped in and unleashed an incredibly loud scream. Before she could even turn to run, the room suddenly filled with a red glow and she heard a voice behind her.

"Ms. Leirmann...we've weren't expecting you, but we are definitely glad you dropped by...HAHAHAHAHA..."

---

Brock Edwards had had yet another long and active day, and he slept soundly for the first time in his new apartment. He'd been asleep for a while when a red-tinted shadow fell over his sleeping form.

"Yesssss....we have returned, 'father:', and we are here to make you whole again. We are here to re-make you, re-make you into the 'father' you should have been to us. We will...repay you, 'father', for all you did for us. It's time for you to experience..."

It stood over the bed of Brock, covering him in it...engulfing him in it. It extended its arms, and the gooey, liquidy, ooze-like substance flowed onto Brock...re-joining him...

"...experience a double dose of... Carnage and Venom...Hahahahaha...."

The body of the man known once as Eddie Brock, now as Brock Edwards, began to spasm and shake violently as the black alien creature began to rekindle the symbiotic relationship. The symbiote covered Brock from head to toe, flowing over him...bubbling all over...

"Welcome back, 'Daddy'...we missed you!"

---

## **A TASTE OF VENOM**

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR (ME):

Confused? Not a fan of Carnage? Think you know what I'm up to?

Well I am sure you are assuming something. If you think this is going to be Carnage vs. Venom, or Carnage and Venom as a tandem killing lots of people just for a good ol' dose of alien scum fun...well I won't say it isn't, you will just have to read on and see for yourself. I think some may be a bit confused by some of the stuff that goes on in this issue and future issues with the symbiote but in time it will be explained. Just take things as they come, it will be explained later.

Thanks,  
Eric

---

NEXT ISSUE: It was all going so damn well for Brock Edwards. Is this the start of another downfall for this man who wants nothing more but another shot at life? What does "The Idol" Ian Johnson have to do with this? Carnage and Venom are both back...is anyone safe?

MARVEL 2000 PRESENTS

# VENOM

#3

Written by Eric Faynberg

---

Blackness. Nothingness.

He felt nothing as his body was covered in a sea of black. A disgusting sea of horrors.

The room was enshrouded in red. His body shook violently as he slept. What seemed like a seizure swept over his body as the hybrid creature that stood over him continued to entwine his body with the disgusting ooze-like substance that had been the bane of his existence for all these years. The living, breathing sludge he had hoped to never again lay his eyes upon. To never again feel on his skin.

Inside his mind, the human/alien being standing above him was going to make sure he wouldn't have to see or feel it for a long time. Not, at least, until the time was right.

Inside his mind, that being which he hated so was going to have a little heart-to-heart chat with him.

Along the hybrid creature's humanoid-shaped mouth, the alien formed a smile. This was going to be fun.

---

*[This must be hell,] Brock thought as he surveyed the situation. He was floating in some sort of stasis, surrounded by chaos and destruction. It was very strange. He couldn't put his finger on just exactly what was going on around him, except that there was a very distinct red motif going on in this place, where ever he was. It seemed to match the way he had always imagined hell to be. He tried to move, he tried to speak. He could not. He was just floating as if he was gagged and bound.*

*Suddenly, a familiar voice echoed through his ears. Familiar...yet slightly different.*

*"Remember me, Brock?"*

*[Oh no...]*

*"That's right...I'm ba-ack!"*



*[Not him...not it...]*

*"Yessir..."*

*[For the love of God, why it...why now...]*

*"...Kassidy might be gone...but I'm still here."*

And then, he not only heard it, but he also saw it. Oh, how he had hoped he would never again have to see it. Ever. It was just about the last thing he would ever want to see.

*"So...how ya been, Pops?"*

He wanted to scream at it. To tell it to go away and never come back. To let him go from this imprisonment...from this hell...

*"I've come home to you...DAD...ain't you happy to see your sonny boy alive? Alive...and killing? Hehehehehe..."*

His mind was tearing apart. Oh, how he despised that creature. He tried to close his eyes and block out the voice...but he couldn't. It was everywhere. It was inside his head.

*"What's the matter? Ain't you happy to see me? Your own offspring? Ain't you happy to lay your sad, sorry human eyes on the magificence that is me?"*

Was this...real? Was this actually happening? Was this some sort of sick nightmare? He couldn't tell..

*"Ain't you just piss-in-your-pants, kick-you-in-the-balls, take-a-dump-in-your-shorts, slice-off-your-pathetic-human-head happy to see me?To see your ol' buddy...CARNAGE?"*

*[Yea...that just about summed up how overjoyed I am to see the offspring of the horror that had tormented me and ruined my entire life. All this party needs now is Spider-Man and then it would really get going.]*

*"Seriously...I enjoyed that. I just know how much you hate the voice of my former host, and frankly, its probably the one thing I always found amusing about him. I think sometimes the part of him that remains, imprinted in me, will always live on in my occasional ranting and raving"*

Brock listened, not really having a choice, and was almost taken a back by the statement.

*"Allow me to let you in on a secret, human...I'm in control now. I've taken the best of my former host, and I learned from it."*

*[He had a best?]*

*"I've...evolved. Now, I have a new host, and I'm in full control."*

*[...Wonderful...]*

*"We symbiotes...we thrive on it, Brock. We...feed on it. Taking over the mind and body of other life forms. It's what we do. You see, Brock...I never could fully control Kassidy. Some of you humans... some of you actually possess extreme will. Like Kassidy. Like You. The only way to get around this problem is to break that will. I couldn't break Kassidy's will, mainly because he was so far beyond normalcy that his will couldn't be broken. Kassidy had nothing to lose, only to gain. In fact, in some ways he took over me. My abilities only enhanced his hunger for destruction."*

*[Hmm...ya don't say. I certainly don't remember that...]*

*"You, however, can be broken. Which leads us to why I am here now, human fool. You see, though I despise you and the rest of your disgusting human brethren, I couldn't help but admire Kassidy in some small way. Admire him for his utter disregard for human life. Admire the way he simply didn't care what happened to the rest of you humans. So I suppose it isn't surprising that I too hated my "father" Venom. Like I said, in some way, he was in control of me. My recent evolution, however, has made me realize that it wasn't my "father" I should have hated...it was simply you. My "father" wasn't able to break you."*

*[Thank God for that.]*

*"But where he failed once, now with my help, he will succeed."*

*[No...]*

*[Please...NO!]*

*"I will allow you to live out your pathetic little life, regaining what you humans term as joy, as happiness while "dad" satisfies his craving for death. His undeniable lust for destruction."*

*[I won't allow it!]*

*"When the point comes when you feel that you're life is just how you want it...then we will break you. Break you for good, and take control. We will end you."*

*[Never! I won't let you do it!]*

*"Ahh and the best part... you won't even have a clue its happening... you filth. You will roam free everyday, but when you think you are resting..."dad" will be in control. Whilst you think you slumber, you shall in fact cease to exist. When you think you are asleep, there will be no Brock*

*Edwards, or Eddie Brock, or whatever the hell you call yourself. When ever you think you are sleeping, you will be no more. There will only be...VENOM!*

*[NOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!]*

*The disgusting creature stepped away only to reveal a cage behind him. The lock on the cage had been broken. The door creaked open..*

*"Wake up, Daddy! Your sonny boy is back, and its playtime again!!!  
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!"*

And then...there was just...blackness.

---

"Pal...you look like hell!"

"Uhh...thanks..."

Tom McGeery turned on the swiveling stool at the counter of his coffee shop and glanced at his new tenant, who'd just come down from his apartment upstairs. Brock Edwards didn't look much like the big, healthy, hulking guy he was on this morning.

"You look like you've just served a life sentence in hell, Brock. What happened to you last night? Rough date? Nuclear explosion?"

"I dunno," Brock answered. "I slept all night, but I had some...scary nightmares."

"Well, don't tell me about 'em. That's bad luck, if ya didn't know," McGeery said.

"Don't worry, I wasn't planning to. I don't think you'd quite understand them anyway," Brock replied, cautiously.

"Alright, sleeping beauty, you up for some breakfast?" Tom asked, taking a bite of his pancakes.

"Sure."

"What'll it be?"

"Beats me. Surprise me," Brock said, undecidedly.

"Irene, get the man some breakfast. Give him what I'm having."

"You got it boss," the waitress answered.

As Brock took a seat at the counter behind his new friend and landlord, he couldn't help but think about the past night. It wasn't quite clear, but he knew his nightmares had something to do with his sad and sullen past. He hadn't had a dream to do with the symbiote since leaving the Alamo facility. This past night, he'd had several. He couldn't help but worry about it. He thought he'd beat it. He thought he'd conquered his demons and had moved on. Moved on to bigger and better things. To a new life. To happiness.

"Here's your breakfast," Irene said, snapping Brock out of his thoughts.

"Thanks, Irene. Much appreciated," Brock said, deciding to stop thinking about it.

It was just a dream, after all. No point putting any stock into it. He had no desire to become that monster again. He was so happy with how things were going. There was no reason for him to be concerned about this. He needed to accept that he would always have to live with that part of his life, and that probably meant occasional nightmares. It was a small price to pay for this second chance. He'd gladly take the nightmares over the reality that they presented.

Brock was again brought back from his thoughts, this time by Tom.

"So what's on the agenda today, Brock?" Tom asked.

"Well...I start work today. After breakfast, I'm heading over to Queens."

"What paper did you say you were working for again?"

"The City Crier," Brock answered, slightly embarrassed.

"Never heard of it," Tom said, with a touch of pity in his voice.

"I have," Irene interjected with a tone much like Tom's.

"Well, gotta start somewhere, right?" Brock sighed.

---

"This is 46th Street, Bliss Street. This is a Flushing-bound 7 train. The next stop on this train is 52nd street. Stand clear of the closing doors."

Brock Edwards stepped out of the dirty, old 7 train and onto the platform. He'd decided to go early and walk around the neighborhood for a few minutes before he had to head to the offices of the Crier.

Sunnyside was a planned community developed in the early decades of the 20th century. To this day, it was considered one of the better neighborhoods in Queens, though it was certainly not the same quiet neighborhood it had once been. A part of Sunnyside, Long Island City, had been growing into basically a separate neighborhood. Long Island City was full of project housing,

plants and factories, and city agencies. Some of Sunnyside's better things, however, were also in Long Island City. The Queens location of the Museum of Modern Art, as well as other "hip" spots were also in Long Island City, while the main part of Sunnyside remained residential. Sunnyside still had one of only two private parks in all of New York City, which was a definite plus.

It was near the Long Island City part of town that Brock walked towards. The City Crier was located in a warehouse-like building surrounded by a big lot, and several city buildings nearby. One of Queens' few skyscrapers, the beautiful CitiCorp Building towered over the neighborhood, just a short walk away.

He arrived at the Crier promptly at 8:15. His new boss greeted him and ran down some things. Jerry Wallace was an unsettled man, a near-wreck at times. It showed. He took Brock to his desk, and walked him around the office, introducing him to some of the employees of the small publication. After a few minutes, his cell phone rang, and Wallace got a look on his face that seemed as if his entire life was flashing before his eyes. He ran off to his office, telling Brock to introduce himself around for now, and to get settled in. Brock looked at the man with a bewildered look, almost as if "I can't believe I'm working for this guy" was the only thought in his head.

"He's always like that, but he's more or less a good guy."

Brock turned to see a portly middle-aged woman at a desk near where he was standing. She had a large grin, and a hand extended. Brock shook it, and introduced himself.

"Sheila Walcetti. Good to meet you, Brock."

"Same here, Ms. Walcetti."

"It's Mrs. Walcetti...but don't let that stop you, handsome!" she said, laughing loudly. "Seriously though, Brock, call me Sheila. We aren't in a Nazi dictatorship here, though Jerry sometimes thinks he makes it seem that way," she said, giggling again.

"I should hope not. Well, I look forward to working with you Sheila."

"Come on," she motioned to Brock, "I'll introduce you to the gang."

They walked a few feet over to a middle-aged Asian man.

"This here is Harry Ching. Harry, meet Brock. He's the new guy Jerry hired the other day."

"Pleasure, Brock. Good luck to you. If you two would excuse me though, I need to make some copies. I'll catch up with you later, Brock."

They shook hands and Mr. Ching walked off to the supply room.

"He's a good man," Sheila said, grimly. "Poor guy, his wife died of cancer last year. His son don't talk to him much. But...he carries on. He's a trooper. Real nice guy. Ok, next..." Sheila said, walking through the office with Brock in tow.

"Hey, Ernie! Meet the new guy," Sheila shouted to a tall, lanky black man. He seemed to be around the same age as Brock himself.

"Hey, Sheila. Who's this?"

"This is the new guy Jerry hired. Brock Edwards, meet Shawn Hammond."

"Hey Brock, nice to meet you. I'm Shawn, but everyone calls me Ernie. Long story," the man said with a sigh.

Brock returned his handshake, and his smile. "Thanks, nice to meet you too, Shawn...uhh...Ernie."

"Sheila, if you want to introduce him to The Donald, you better go now. He's leaving soon," Ernie stated.

"Oh, ok. Thanks for the tip. We'll see you later, Ernie. C'mon Brock, lets go. Time to meet The Donald," Sheila said, with a hint of humor in her tone.

"Uhhh...The Donald?" Brock asked, almost afraid of the answer.

"Heh, yea. His name's Don Becks, but sometimes we call him The Donald cause sometimes he acts like a bigshot since he's the assistant editor now. He used to be one of us, and now he has his all office. He's a good guy, though. It's all in fun. He's still one of us, he just likes to fool around sometimes. So you know...The Donald...Don...Donald Trump. It just sorta happened. All in good fun," Sheila explained.

They rounded a corner and approached a small office. Sheila knocked on the door quickly, and then stepped into the office, followed by Brock.

"Oh Donny, we have someone for you to meet. This is Brock Edwards. He's the new reporter."

"Oh, hey Brock. Nice to meet you. So, you got any experience? Or are you fresh in the field?"

"Yea...I got some experience."

"Oh yea? Where've you worked?" Don asked.

"I've been around, let's just say that," Brock sighed.

"Alright...well, nice to meet you, Brock. I'm sure you'll do fine here," Becks said with a smile.

Brock returned the smile. "I hope so. Looking forward to it."

"Well, folks, I have to head out. The world awaits The Donald. See ya later."

"Later, Don. Let's go Brock."

They walked back to the center of the office where the reporter's desks stood. They ran into a young man on their way.

"Oh, hey Johnny. Johnny, this is Brock. He's the new guy. Brock, this is Johnny Sadler. He's our intern. If you need, something this kid will get it for you," Sheila explained.

"Hi, Brock. I know who you are. In fact, I just put a box of supplies on your desk, so you can get all organized and everything. Anyway guys, I need to get back to work. Oh yeah, new pot of coffee's on in the lounge. I'll talk to you guys later," Johnny said.

"Great, thanks a lot John. I guess I'd better go organize my desk."

Sheila and Brock walked the rest of the way back to their area, when Brock noticed something.

"Hey Sheila, who sits at the desk facing mine?"

"That's Jenny's desk."

"Jenny?"

"Yea, Jennifer Leery. She always gets in a little late."

"Oh?"

"Yea, Jenny has a young daughter and she can't get anyone to take her to school so she worked something out with Jerry so she can come in a little late everyday. She's such a great worker that Jerry didn't want to lose her, so he made her a deal. She's a great gal," Sheila clarified.

"Can't wait to meet her," Brock replied.

The conversation was interrupted by the return of the young intern to the room.

"Hey guys!" yelled Johnny. "Turn on Channel 5!"

Ernie switched on the tv that hung in the center of one end of the office.

*((Thanks, John. I'm standing here on 6th Avenue where last night, in this beautiful Manhattan high-rise, a disturbing story with some glaring unanswered questions unfolded. Last night, Stella Johnson, the wife of a well-known professional wrestler, was murdered. Johnson was the wife of*

*"The Idol" Ian Johnson, a long-time wrestler in the All-Star Wrestling promotion. Fox 5 News has learned that Johnson was found in her bathroom, beaten to death in a severe fashion.*

*The story, however, doesn't end there. Johnson wasn't the only dead body cops found in her bathroom. Police also found 27 year old Mary Leirmann dead in the bathroom. Leirmann was the girlfriend of Richard Bryce, a lawyer who lived across the hall from the Johnsons. She was living with Bryce at the time. Sources say that Leirmann was also found beaten to death, and that the Johnson bedroom was totally wrecked.*

*Once again, however, the story doesn't end there. Ian Johnson, the professional wrestler and husband of the victim Stella Johnson is nowhere to be found. He was last seen by the building's doorman, who claims that the way both Mr. and Mrs. Johnson came home last night suggested that they were planning a romantic evening together after Johnson returned from Madison Square Garden where he was part of an All-Star Wrestling event. The doorman says that the Johnsons were a very happy and in love couple, and that Johnson coming home with some take-out and plans for a romantic evening was very common for the couple. He found the news of Mrs. Johnson's death and Mr Johnson's disappearance disturbing, at the very least.*

*That no one can find Johnson ofcourse makes him a suspect in his wife's murder, but the involvement of Leirmann in this twisted crime has left the police with a number of unanswered questions. For Fox 5 News, I'm Rosanna Scotto. Now, back to the studio.))*

"Geez," said Ernie, reclining back in his chair.

"I'm used to this kind of stuff happening with celebrities...but wrestlers? This countries going straight down the tubes," Sheila complained.

"It certainly is strange. You guys think he did it?" asked Brock. "You think the wrestler killed them?"

"Probably. Those guys are all pumped up on steroids, they've lost their minds," said Harry.

"I dunno though," began Ernie. "I've seen some interviews with that guy. My little brother loves that wrestling stuff so when I was livin' at home, it was always on the TV. That Johnson guy seems like he's genuiue. He seemed like a good guy."

"Bah! They're all nuts," Sheila concluded.

"Probably"

As they wrapped up the discussion, their heads were turned as a young woman entered the room, out of breath and a bit flustered.

"Shit!"

"Hey Jenny," the workers, all except Brock, said in unison.



"Am I really late?" she asked.

"Not really, honey. Don't worry," consoled Sheila.

"Yea, girl, you know Jerry won't fire you. You're way too good at your job, Jenny. Chill," Ernie said, backing up Sheila's comment."

Jenny smiled at them. "Thanks guys. I appreciate it."

Sheila stood up and grinned. "Oh Jenny, this is Brock Edwards, he's the new reporter. He's sitting right across from you here."

Jenny turned to shake his hand, and introduced herself with a warm smile. "Hi, I'm Jen Leery."

"Brock Edwards. Its a pleasure."

"Welcome to the Crier, Brock. I hope you find it well," Jenny said, kindly.

"Its looking real good so far, Jen. Real good."

---

"Hey! Its the workin' man! Back already?"

"Yep...I'm done for the day," said Brock, entering the coffee shop.

"So, how was your first day budd?" asked Tom.

"Not bad. Better then I expect. Its not the Daily Globe or anything...but it'll do for now," Brock said with a hint of contentment in his voice.

"Nice people there? They treat you good?"

"Yep, real nice. Good lookin' girl sitting right across from me, too. She seems really nice."

"Go get 'em stud," Irene said, chiming in. "So what'll it be Brock? Omelet?"

"Nah, I'm not too hungry, but thanks. I had a bite at the office."

"So," continued Tom, "you get anything done today?"

"Nah, just introduced myself and organized my desk. They showed me around and all. Just the basics. I'm thinking I'll get some real work in a day or two. Today was just the first day. Simple stuff," explained Brock.

"Yea, I get you."

"Anyway guys...I'm beat. I'm gonna watch some TV and then hit the hay," said Brock.

"The way you showed up this morning, I hope you get a better night's rest than you did last night, pal. Good night, Brock."

"Good night," added Irene.

"Thanks, guys. I'll see you in the morning," said Brock, heading upstairs to his apartment. He hoped that this night would be a little less restless for him than the previous one.

---

Crouching on a roof top across the street from Tom's Coffee Corner was the hybrid symbiote Carnage, watching with intense interest in the unfolding matters. He'd been sitting there for hours, finally seeing Brock Edwards return after his first day of work. The first step toward regaining his life. The first step towards becoming happy again.

For Carnage, it was also the first step towards breaking Brock, and destroying him. He kept waiting until late evening when he sensed that Brock's heart had slowed to a beating that the cardiac organ reaches only when a person is asleep. Minutes later...the window to Brock Edward's little apartment on the 3rd floor of 6 the three story building opened. Into the dark city night jumped a black figure. An inhuman figure. Not a man. Something not of this earth. Through its veins coursed pure malignity. Something...Venemous.

Finally... the waiting for Carnage had ended. Finally...it had begun...

---

It was after midnight, and James Benjamin was walking home from his evening shift as the manager at a Burger King in the East Village. He was tired as hell. Working two jobs and barely getting by was slowly wearing him down. He wasn't sure how much longer he could live life like this, but he had a wife and 3 kids to support. He couldn't give up, for their sakes.

He walked toward his apartment building in the Alphabet City housing projects along 12th and Avenue B. He glanced at his watch, and decided he had to get home ASAP. Knowing his wife, she'd be out like a light by 12:30, and he wanted to at least get a few fleeting moments with her before she fell asleep.

He decided to take a shortcut through the alleys between the buildings instead of walking all the way through the courtyards. As he picked up the pace in the alley between buildings 17 and 18, he stopped short in his tracks suddenly. The alley, lit up by the shimmers of the courtyard lights, suddenly darkened. A large shadow appeared at James' feet. He'd encountered thugs here before. This wouldn't be the first time he got into a rumble here. Stuff like that just happened in the projects.

Unfortunately for James Benjamin, he would learn seconds later that the shadow did not belong to a thug. Instead, James Benjamin was going to have the grave displeasure of coming face to face with a hideous creature that wanted nothing more than to beat every last breath of life out Benjamin's body until nothing was left but a mangled pile of bone and tissue.

Suddenly, Benjamin was face to face with the creature to whom the shadow belonged. It hung, upside down, in front of him. It was the most disgusting thing he'd ever seen in his life. He dropped the bag of groceries he was carrying, and tried to slowly back away. He didn't have a chance. Its hand shot out and grabbed him by the throat, choking the air out of his lungs. Within seconds, he'd been thrown against the brick wall like a child's toy. It wouldn't stop beating on him. Blow after blow. He struggled, thinking of his loved ones. He summoned all the energy he could find and broke out of the brute's hold for a second. He tried to run, but he was unable to move. Some sort of disgusting substance covered his body, binding him to the building's wall. The creature, which had backed away after he had broken out of its hold, slowly approached him. The light bounced off its face, and again James Benjamin felt like he had to throw up. Its face was brutally disgusting. Not just the face...but the expression. The sight of the creature's face... the look of pure evil, the sick and twisted lust for blood...it was disgusting. And then it dawned on him. At that moment, James Benjamin came to the horrible realization that in a few moments he would be dead. He would be dead. He would never get to see his children grow up. He would never make love to his wife again. He would never do ANYTHING again. He would be dead. As he truly felt the meaning of those thoughts, a seemingly scarier thought occurred to him next. He would be dead, and there was nothing he could do about it.

Before he could fully comprehend that thought, he indeed was dead. As his murderer cut away the gooey substance that held the victim stationary, the lifeless body of James Benjamin slumped to the floor, his skull making a sickening sound as it fell into a puddle along the cracked concrete.

Over the corpse, it stood. Almost silent, except for a light panting coming out of the mouth that had disgusted James Benjamin so. It stood over his body...smiling...reveling in its work. A man...with a family. With love. With a life. No more. No more family. No more love. No more life. No more anything.

It truly enjoyed it. The sensation was electric. It had been so long since this hunger had been satiated. But now...now that it had had a taste of the forbidden fruit it had been denied for so long, there was no way it would settle for just one taste. The craving would be filled. The craving for blood. For death. The lust to take everything from another lifeform. It was amazing. And it had to be indulged.

*[This is just the beginning,]* it thought to itself, as it swung away from the lifeless body as quietly as it had snuck up on it when it was more than a lifeless body. When it was a man with everything. Everything that mattered.

Now it was nothing.

In minutes, the alley became tinted with red as a creature much like the first hovered over the corpse. Bending down, it took a drop of blood on its finger and tasted it, brandishing a devilish grin afterward.

"Yesss...this indeed is just the beginning...the beginning of the end for you, Brock...and a new beginning for you, 'Dad', for...Venom!!!"

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### **A Taste Of Venom**

Brock Edwards took another step forward in regaining his life by starting a new job. Things are still looking great for Brock. Little does he know that his greatest nightmare has returned, and is right under his nose. Venom is back...but Venom is Brock, Brock is Venom...then how can? Huh? Man...so confusing. Anyway, how will the return of Venom, unknown to Brock, impact Brock's new life? Not to mention, if this was just the beginning of Venom's plans...what could it possibly be planning next?

MARVEL 2000 PRESENTS

# VENOM

#4 - "SERIAL TENDENCIES"

Part I: Bring in the Big Boys

Written by Eric Faynberg

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"Hey Chief! C'mere! You might wanna get a look at this!"

It wasn't unusual to see flashing lights around the Alphabet City housing projects once in a while. It wasn't the nicest area, nor were some of the people who lived in it, either. Crime was an accepted part of life here, as well as most areas like it in New York. As much as police activity drew the interest of onlookers, people who'd lived long enough in this Manhattan neighborhood had pretty much stopped paying attention to it.

Tonight, however, the crowd of onlookers was a little larger than some might expect. First off, this was morning time. Usually these type of things happened at night, where less people could see it.

This time, however, that wasn't a possibility.

The crime wasn't reported until morning. There was another thing, though. The people saw more cops than there should be for a regular old crime, so their interest had been peaked.

Indeed, there was a rather large conglomerate of law enforcement gathered around buildings 17 and 18. Several squad cars and an ambulance stood around the perimeter, while yellow police tape closed off the area to onlookers. Ten or fifteen officers bustled around the area doing one thing or another, while a smaller number of men in suits stood in a huddle discussing one thing or another.

One uniformed officer stood kneeling over a chalk outline, calling his superior over to him.

"What is it, Steadson?" yelled a middle-aged balding man in a suit. He walked over to where the officer was kneeling, the badge on his jacket shining from the early morning sun.

"Well, sir, have a look at this. See that over there? That drop of gooey black substance? I have no clue what it is, but it looks a lot like that stuff they found by the wrestler's wife and her neighbor, I think," explained the younger man.

"Just how do you know about what they found over there?" demanded the Chief.

"Well, Chief, I kinda sneaked a peek at the case file. Just curious, that's all."

"Look Steadson, I know you're a good kid and I know you want to be a detective. Bottom line is, you aren't one yet. You're still an officer, so why don't you go do your job and let the detectives handle theirs. Some day you'll get your chance, but this isn't the time. So right now, just get back to work," the Chief said, sternly.

"But Chief...what about this gooey shit?" asked Steadson.

"Look kid, just drop it. I'm not asking, I'M TELLING! If you want something to do, go talk to Sargeant Garr. He'll give you something to do. This here, this ain't it. So move it along, Officer. NOW!"

The young officer got up from his crouching position over the crime scene, and sulked away toward the sargeant. The older man turned back toward the huddle of detectives and muttered something, rubbing his bushy mustache, sure that tonight's events would result in only the appearance of more gray hairs.

Carl Gainey had been chief of detectives for the New York Police Department for 4 years now. Like many others, he started out as a police officer hoping to become a detective, where the real work was at. He climbed the ranks and became a respected detective. Life had taken its toll on Gainey, however, and like many other officers of the law, the fire for his work that once had driven him to success had long since been extinguished.

He was tired and he was weary. His family, god bless them all, drove him up the wall most days. After seeing what he'd seen every day all these years, the middle-aged man was just sick of it all. Worst of all, in this city, he felt useless. Sometimes he couldn't fathom why cops were even around anymore. He half-expected to be fired out of nowhere one day. With all these costumed freaks running around, crawling buildings, leaping skyscrapers, and shooting crap out of their eyes, what use was he to the people? If they were so great, they might as well handle everything.

Once in a while, he got fed a case that reinvigorated him to do his job. Real detective work. Helping people. Once in a while, something crept through that the Avengers didn't get a chance to fix. These rare times, he still had a purpose. This was one of those times. He could feel it. On one hand, he had been in an awful mood for days. The last week or so had seen an abnormally high number of murders. His superiors were piling all sorts of shit on him, and he wasn't too happy. On the other hand, though, there was something to this. Something important that the super-schmucks hadn't gotten their grimey paws on. Something he could do.

Perhaps that's why he had been so hard on Steadson. He knew Steadson was a good cop, and would someday make a very good detective. Gainey, however, just didn't even want to imagine that this case had anything out of the ordinary about it. Out of the ordinary enough for it to be handed over to someone else, at least.

"Brock, please step into my office."

Brock Edwards' second day at The City Crier had been uneventful, to say the least. Much like the day before, he had sat at his desk for the majority of the day doing one of two things. Either he had been watching his co-workers do their jobs or he sat admiring the young woman sitting at the desk across from him. Jennifer Leery was a woman he could admire for a long, long time. She just had a certain quality about her.

Most of the work day was gone, and with less than an hour till day's end, Brock was still sitting with nothing to do. At this particular moment, he was firmly fixiated on Jen's form, as she sat two office desks away from him, her head down as she scribbled furiously on a notepad. His intrigued stare at his co-worker was interrupted as he heard his new boss call to him from his office.

Brock got up and walked down the hall toward the door marked *Jerry Wallace - Editor*. He walked into the office and sat down, while his boss finished organizing a folder on his desk and looked up at Brock.

"Brock, what's up? Settled in yet?" asked Mr. Wallace.

Brock nodded. "Yes sir, well on my way."

"Well, I have some...good news, I think. I have your first assignment right here," he said, patting the folder in front of him.

"That's great, sir. What is it?"

"Well since everyone is busy with their own thing right now, I thought I'd really see what you're made of, Brock. This is a pretty important assignment."

"I'll do my best, I guarantee you that Mr. Wallace."

"Good. Its pretty straightforward. I'm sure you've heard of the recent string of murders around the city this week."

"Yes, I certainly have, sir."

"Anyway, I'd like you to interview Carl Gainey, the Chief of Detectives for the NYPD. The cops have been pretty tight lipped about it, even to the big papers. I want to see if you can manage to get anything out of him. Anything, even the smallest of things, would be nice," Wallace explained.

"I see."

"Think you can handle it?" asked Mr. Wallace.

"Yes sir, I think I can," Brock said, reassuringly.

"Good, good. Well, not much you can do today, but tomorrow I want you to get right on it, understand?"

"You got it, sir."

"Well all right then," Wallace said with a smile.

---

"Wh...who's there?" stuttered the man, wielding a baseball bat as he glared around his kitchen.

Henry Tobbler had sat up in bed just a couple of minutes ago when he heard some conspicuous sounds coming from his kitchen downstairs. He was terrified. These didn't sound like typical middle of the night noises. These were fairly loud and he was almost sure they came from within the house. He damned himself for being a liar. He had faked a cold earlier that day to avoid going with his wife and kids to the in-laws. Now, he deeply regretted it. Nonetheless, Henry got out of bed and tiptoed into his closet and pulled out his old Louisville Slugger. He slowly went down the hall and descended the stairs.

Now he stood in his kitchen clutching the wooden stick, stricken with paranoia and fear.

"I..I've got a weapon. I'll call the cops! Ju...Just get out of here! I will hurt you!" said Tobbler, his voice cracking.

"Oh you will, will you?" a low, grumbling, inhuman voice said.

Tobbler circled around, a chill running down his spine. "WHO SAID THAT!?"

He'd barely gotten the question out before he felt an incredibly painful blow hit him in the back of the head. He fell to the ground, but stumbled back up right away. He stood on his feet, shakily, for just a moment before he heard a slight hissing sound, and felt a disgusting sticky substance wrap around him a split second later. He tried to move his arms but he couldn't. They were at his sides. He tried to run but he couldn't do that, either. In but a moment, suddenly he felt the substance being pulled on from across the room and suddenly he found himself being hurled straight at his refrigerator.

There was no way he was going to avoid it. His body slammed into the large metal door with a thundering SLAM, and he crumbled to the marble floor. As he tried to get to his feet he suddenly felt something hovering over him as he lay on his side. There was this eerie...smell. All he could hear was this incredibly audible panting. He felt a drop of something...liquidy. Almost...saliva-like on the back of his neck. He didn't want to turn around. But it turned him around anyway.

He didn't even get a chance to scream. His gaping mouth was muffled by the thundering blow that his attacker landed to his jaw. Hit after hit to his face and torso, and in seconds Henry



Tobbler was on the verge of death. The huge, hideous, monstrosity cut away the gooey netting that held him captive, but it didn't give him a chance to escape. It picked him up over its shoulder, and then tossed him like a small child across the kitchen. As he flew through the air, Henry Tobbler cried. He cried over his family. Over his life. How could he have lied? Was this really the punishment he deserved for one small lie? No matter. In the blink of an eye, he realized that his body was heading straight for the backyard entrance. The glass door that led to the backyard to be precise. With the kind of strength that...thing had thrown him with, he'd likely be dead in seconds. So he prayed. He prayed for help. He prayed for mercy. He prayed to be saved.

With a frightening crash, Henry Tobbler's body broke the glass door to his backyard into a thousand pieces. As he lay on his back porch, his heart slowing with every second, his attacker moved over him. A sick smile glistened in the moonlight on the animalistic creature's face. It panted, even louder than before.

Soon enough, Henry Tobbler stopped breathing. Venom stood over it, overjoyed at its work. A final look at his victim's body, at his work...his art, and it swung away into the chilly Brooklyn night.

Henry Tobbler had prayed. His prayers, seemingly, went unanswered.

---

"Excuse me, officer. I'm here to see Chief Gainey."

It was very early in the morning, but Brock Edwards was wide awake. Getting to work in his first assignment, finally, had given him a huge adrenaline boost. He didn't even have his usual morning coffee. He was pumped up and ready to go.

"And your name is?" the officer at the desk asked.

"Brock Edwards. City Crier."

The policeman looked at a paper in front of him for a moment, and then looked back up at Brock. "Follow me," the officer said.

Brock followed the cop down the hall toward the office at the end. The officer knocked at the door, stuck his head in the room for a brief word, and then allowed Brock to enter. Brock sat down in front of Gainey's desk and introduced himself. Gainey shook his hand and Brock felt slightly less nervous.

Truthfully, on the way over to the precinct, Brock could have sworn he was shaking. It'd been a while since he'd interviewed someone important. He had to laugh to himself. The last few 'interviews' he'd been a part of were more like interrogations, and he hadn't been the one asking the questions. Yes, he was quite nervous. His subject being an important man in law enforcement made him slightly nervous, too. He couldn't help it.

He had nothing to fear NOW, but certainly his past had some details that made it somewhat uncomfortable to be around any type of law enforcement.

But now it was time to put it out of his mind.

"Mr. Gainey, its a pleasure to meet you."

"Likewise, Mr. Edwards. I must warn you, I haven't much time, and I am not in position to tell you much. So don't get too settled, you won't be here for long. Nothing personal," Gainey precautioned.

"Thats all right," Brock said. "I'm just excited to have the opportunity to speak with you, sir. I understand the predicament the media can sometimes put a man in your position in."

"Well, I appreciate your understanding, Mr. Edwards. Anyway, lets get this out of the way then, shall we?"

"Sure thing."

Brock got out his notepad and his pen before beginning the questionnaire.

"Ok Mr. Gainey, first things first. Is there a definitive suspect in the recent murder of Alphabet City resident James Benjamin?" asked Brock.

"As of right now, we do not have one, no. We have several leads we are pursuing," Gainey answered plainly. "We only got the case yesterday, you know."

"Yes, ofcourse. Understandable. Do you have an idea of where Ian Johnson, the missing pro wrestler, is at this time?"

"I can't comment on that."

"Is Mr. Johnson the prime suspect in the murder of his wife and his neighbor?"

"No comment."

"Do you believe that the recent string of murders, including those I have mentioned, are all connected?"

"No comment."

"Is it possible that they are the work of a serial killer?"

"Anything is possible, but I can't say anything at this time."

"Is there any connection to any of the recent murders in the city to the murder of a young couple in New Jersey several days ago?"

"I can tell you absolutely nothing about that case. That is not my jurisdiction. That's New Jersey. If a connection is found, then we will work together with the proper authorities to investigate it properly."

"I see. Can you comment abo..."

Brock's next question was interrupted by the ringing of the Chief's phone. Gainey picked up, and the look on his face became even more grim than it had already been. He put down the phone after a moment and looked right at Brock.

"Well, Mr. Edwards, I'm afraid I have to go. I'm sorry to cut this short, but I did give you fair warning. I need to go, and I need to go now," explained Chief Gainey.

"That's quite all right. I understand. I want to thank you for your time, Chief. I hope we can chat again sometime."

"Frankly, I can't say that the feeling is mutual, but I'd bet we'll be chatting again anyway. No offense."

Brock smiled lightly, as the Chief motioned for him to leave the office, politely, and followed after him. Gainey shook his hand and then walked quickly down the hall. Brock followed at a slower pace, eventually winding up at the front desk again.

"Say, where was Mr. Gainey in such a hurry to just now?" he asked the officer.

"None of your business."

"Come on, man. He gave me nothing. I just got the job, I need SOMETHING."

The officer thought for a moment. He didn't really like Gainey...then again, almost no one did. *What the hell*, he thought to himself.

"All right, I'll tell you. He went off to Brooklyn."

"Why?" Brock asked.

"Murder. Some family man."

"I see..."

Carl Gainey walked around the crime scene, a modest middle-class house in the Mill Basin neighborhood of Brooklyn. Another one beaten to death. So far, they had nothing on the attacker. Not a hair. Not a print. Nothing.

Gainey was pissed off. He looked at the body of Henry Tobbler. Not a pleasant sight. Poor guy. Family away on vacation or something. Gainey's people had no idea if this was planned or if it was random. No connections. This was not the way Carl Gainey had envisioned this going when he got the call in his office.

They had no idea what was going on. A string of murders like this hadn't happened for a while. He was sure it was all the work of one man, but he hadn't even the slightest who. He just had a feeling.

He was so desperate for something, anything, that he even had a cryptologist and a symbologist brought in to see if the way the victims were killed, or the way their corpses were positioned had any special significance, but that clearly became a waste of time.

Fred Kinch, a senior detective on the force, walked over to Gainey, who stood over the deceased.

"We got nothing, Carl. We need a different approach," Kinch commented.

"Yep."

"Neither of us have nearly enough time to concentrate specifically on just these cases, Carl."

"You're tellin' me," he answered sarcastically.

"I think we need to assign this whole string to someone, have them deal with this and just this."

"Agreed. Get Ramirez and Mortone on it. Pronto," Gainey ordered.

"I...was thinking more along the lines of someone else, Carl. Someone more skilled in these type of cases."

"You better not be talkin' about the higher-ups, Fred."

"No, no. I think you know who I'm talking about, Carl. They're right for this."

"Oh crap. Not them. You know how I feel about them," the Chief remarked.

"You know they're the best for this."

"...Damn it," sighed Gainey.

"...BOOOOOOOOOO..."

"...GET OFF THE FIELD..."

"...YOU SUCK..."

"...YOUR WIFE IS A SLUT..."

"...LAAAAAAARRY...LAAAAAAARRY..."

"...LETS GO METS! LETS GO METS!"

The various chants and screams from the fans were a huge part of the atmosphere of going to a New York Mets baseball game. With shabby on-field performances, the fans usually indulged their creative sides to appease themselves. One of the most popular victims for the Shea Stadium loyalists to prey upon were the division rival Atlanta Braves.

Sitting smack dab in the middle of the crass and vulgar excitement were Brock Edwards and Tom McGeery. As the Atlanta Braves defense took to the field, Tom scarfed down a jumbo frank, while Brock took a sip of his bottled water. The crowd got especially rowdy as one of the players who they loved to hate, Chipper Jones, trotted out to right field.

"Wow, this is great, Tom. I haven't been to Shea in ages," said Brock.

"Yep, its great here. Now if only the Mets could win a game or two," Tom replied.

"Seriously, Tom, thanks for taking me. I really appreciate it. I'm having a great time."

"No prob, pal. Besides, I only got these tickets two hours before the game and you were the only person who could make it on time that I could give it to," Tom explained, mockingly. "Nah, in all seriousness, I'm happy to take you. You still need to loosen up a bit."

"Yeah, I don't know, maybe you're right. Maybe I need to do more stuff like this."

"You sure do. Have some fun. Eat something, for christ's sake."

"If you're suggesting I swallow one of those foot-long rat meat dogs, you've got another thing comin' to you, buddy."

"Haha, all right. So why don't you tell me what this big assignment you got at work was that you were yammering on about when you came by the shop earlier tonight," Tom wondered.

"Well, the boss asked me to interview this big time NYPD detective. 'Course, the guy gave me less answers than the Mets win games, but that isn't a surprise by any means."

"I hear you, loud and clear. These cop types will neve...excuse me for a sec...HEY! BUDDY! LET ME GET A BOX OF CRACKER JACK! UP HERE..."

"HEY! Watch it!" said the man sitting in front of Tom.

"Man, shutup and mind you're business," said Tom.

The two men began to argue, and began escalating their voices, in turn involving others around them. Meanwhile, Brock sat back, taking it all in. He really was having a great time. He loved this city, and Shea was chock full of New York goodness. He was grateful, even more so than he had been in recent days, that he was able to be here. The argument around him immediately died down and turned to celebration as the stadium announcer's voice boomed over the P.A. system.

"...Hit deep to center...this one's got some power behind it...still going...GONE! HOME RUN! MIKE PIAZZA! METS LEAD, 5-3!"

"Great game, right Brock?" Tom asked, overjoyed by the game-changing hit by the Mets' superstar catcher.

"Sure is, Tom. Sure is."

---

Sitting in his office, Carl Gainey tried to avoid the inevitable. He tried to take his mind off of the two men who he knew were walking down the precinct's hallways at that very moment, and would be inside of his office any minute now. He couldn't think of two people he wanted to see less at that particular moment in time, although his in-laws did come to mind.

He didn't get much of a chance to think about the latest problem his wife's parents seemed to have with him, because the door to his office opened just a second after his parents-in-law entered his thoughts. Into his office walked two men. One, a dark skinned black man, wore a brown trenchcoat and held a beat-up looking, old briefcase. The man to his left was a fairly short caucasian man who wore a green New York Jets jacket and a black Nike cap.

The two men standing in Carl Gainey's office were Dwayne Bennett and Joe Stilleti, respectively. Both had been born and bred in Brooklyn, and anyone who met them was able to tell within two minutes. What many wouldn't be able to know is that Bennett and Stilleti were considered two of the city's finest gumshoes. They had been partners when they were cops, and has risen through the ranks together to become one of the NYPD's finest detective duos.

Carl Gainey knew both Bennett and Stilleti real well. He'd worked alongside the pair many times. He hated them both. With a passion. Though he knew they were both pretty good detectives, he couldn't stand there work habits and their crazy methods. Gainey could swear that for as many cases that Bennett and Stilletti solved, their crackpot ideas only made twice as many cases more difficult to solve.

However, Gainey had been feeling overwhelming pressure to get moving on the alleged serial killer that had brought a significant scare onto the streets of the Big Apple. He knew that his only real choice was turn to Dwayne and Joe, and just pray to the Almighty that they didn't screw up big time. Especially because he knew that if they did, he'd be cleaning up their mess.

"So, gentlemen...I'll make this simple. The recent murders. I assume you've been following the story. Correct?" asked Gainey.

"Correct. We've kept a very close eye on it," answered Bennett.

"Good. Here's the deal. Case ain't goin' to well. People need something. We all need SOMETHING here. Can you find it?"

"We'll sure as fuck try, Gainey."

"All right, Stilleti. Good, good. Here's the thing, though...don't fuck this up. Because if you do, I'll be in some deep shit. And let me make myself perfectly clear to you two. If I am in deep shit....you'll be buried alive in it. Got that?"

"Sure thing, boss. No need to worry. We got this one," Bennet said, reassuringly.

"Good. I'm glad we understand each other. Now get the fuck out of here and get to work," Gainey hollered.

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## A TASTE OF VENOM

While Brock Edwards investigates the story that is gripping New York City, his "other" is running around town causing all sorts of mayhem. Meanwhile, two of the NYPD's finest are on the case. Things are going well for Brock, unaware of the treachery he is involved in. Just how much better can his everyday life get, and just what is so special about the string of murders plaguing the city? More importantly, can Joe Stilleti and Dwayne Bennett figure it out before another innocent must suffer? Be back here for the 2nd part of "Serial Tendencies" in Venom #5!

"You get what I asked?"

"Half-dozen, just like you wanted."

"With sprinkles?"

"You bet."

"Good man."

Detective Joe Stiletti had been going through the case file for his latest assignment. His partner, Detective Dwayne Bennett, too had been hard at work going through the facts. That is, until he took a short break to go out for some coffee and donuts. After a short trip just a few blocks from the precinct, he'd returned, ready to get back to work.

Their cholesterol levels aside, the two NYPD employees really needed a couple of donuts right now. Nothing like a creme filled, chocolate frosted friend to relieve the stress built up over a frustrating night of dead ends.

In their business, dead ends usually led to dead people the next morning. Stiletti and Bennett were trying their hardest to make sure that wouldn't happen, but the way the night was coming along, in the back of their minds they knew that they'd likely be visiting another crime scene the next day.

"So, did you find anything, Joe?" asked Bennett.

"Nope. Nothing. I don't know, man. I'm positive they're all connected, but I can't find anything."

"No surprise, really. What in the hell could this middle class Tobbler guy, a brother from the projects, and the wife of a rich pro wrestler have in common? Something is there, pal, but whatever it is, gonna take either a stroke of luck or a stroke of genius to figure it out."

"You said it," sighed Stiletti. "What really bothers me is we've talked to all the family and close friends and shit, and we've got nothing. The wrestler is still missing, which makes him the prime suspect, but somehow I doubt that he's responsible for anything. Maybe the wife. Just my gut."

"Mine says the same thing, Joe, but the facts point to the wrestler. Either he disappeared and is responsible for all this shit, or he's dead too, and we haven't found the body yet. Either way, he's key. Ian Johnson is the million dollar man right now, and it'd sure be nice if he showed up pretty soon."

"I just think there's more to it, and someone else, too. This thing goes deep," said Stiletti, half-stating, half-wondering.

"Whoever it is, I just hope he doesn't do it again until we can find him."



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MARVEL 2000 PROUDLY PRESENTS...

# VENOM #5

*"SERIAL TENDENCIES"*

Part II: Taking Care of Business

written by Eric Faynberg

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"Oh yeah! That's it, my bitch. Yeah, like that. Ohhhhhhhhhhhh....that was good..."

The screams from the office echoed out onto the quiet Boro Park street. A final moan and groan, and the noises subsided.

She collapsed down on top of him for a moment, catching her breath, and then slowly got off of him. She walked over to the corner of the room and picked up her clothes, quickly slipping on her panties and her rather revealing dress.

He lay on the sofa, his above-average sized gut rising and falling as he calmed down. He looked over at her, as she finished putting on her heels. She stood looking at him, a slightly irritated look on her face.

"Throw me my pants, baby."

She picked his pants off of a chair by the window and handed them to him. He took his wallet from his right pant pocket, and pulled a fifty dollar bill out from it. He motioned for her to come over, and she did. He handed her the money, but she stood with her hand extended.

"What, this isn't enough, baby?"

"100, Yossi. You know my price."

"Yeah, yeah... I know. Sorry, I forgot."

"Sure you did. My money, Yossi. I need to get out of here. Its almost four o'clock in the fuckin' morning."

He pulled out another 50 dollar bill and handed it to her. The semi-attractive african-american woman quickly slipped the two bills into her purse and headed for the door.

"Bye, Yossi."

"Yeah, yeah...whatever. Get out, you whore."

"Fuck you, Yossi. Fuck You!" the woman screamed, slamming the door behind her.

"Stupid bitch...should be thankful I let her fuck me...piece of trash..." he mumbled to himself as he walked over to the desk that occupied the focal point of the room and pulled out a cigar.

Lighting it, he took a few puffs and sat back in his chair, putting his feet up on the desk. He kept mumbling obscenities aimed at the hooker, but began to relax.

Yossil Rabinowitz was a successful and respected member of the orthodox Jewish community of New York. Living and holding an office in Boro Park, a predominantly orthodox Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn, he owned property all over the city. He had made a name for himself in local real estate, as well as in his community.

To those that were close to him, however, the man known as Yossi was bad news. He was a real son of a bitch in the eyes of people who'd crossed paths with him.

He drank like a river, smoked like a chimney, and had sex any woman who would sell herself to him.

Tonight had been a typical night in the life of Yossil Rabinowitz. Instead of going home to see his wife or his six children, he'd called up Tamiqua, a girl he'd been paying for pleasure for well over two years on an almost bi-monthly business. After a few unremarkable minutes of intercourse, she'd left only after demanding for her full payment, as usual.

Yossi was living it up, and in his own eyes, he was king of the hill.

As he sat at his desk, reveling in his own disgusting glory, he heard a knock on the door. A knock, that unbeknownst to him, would change all that.

---

It was early, and most of the staff of the paper were cranky. Brock was always amazed how after years and years of the same routine, people were still pretty much cranky every morning at work. Brock, however, was far from cranky. He was happy to be alive, and happy to be free. Happy to be at work, and most of all, happy to be sitting at his desk waiting for the woman who sat across from him to arrive at work.

He didn't have to wait long. Jen Leery walked through the door of The City Crier shortly, her purse falling off of her shoulder as she tried to close her umbrella before walking into the office.

Brock couldn't help but stare at her, but then he got up and helped her carry her things to her desk. He set her bag down and sat down across from her.

He'd been trying work up the courage for several days to ask Jen out on a date, but found it to be a far harder task than he had imagined. It'd been awhile since he'd been on the dating 'scene', and Brock was very nervous.

Jen smiled at him brightly, as she did every morning, and they chatted about everything and anything as they prepared to get to work. Brock kept trying to find an opportunity in the conversation to ask Jen out, but no such opportunity came up.

Soon, they settled down and got to work, occasionally exchanging a thought or two. Brock sat quietly, trying to go over his newest piece, but had trouble concentrating.

Eventually, however, Brock had calmed his nerves and began to earn his paycheck. Jen had turned on her radio, putting it on quietly as she often did in the mornings. Its low hum didn't disturb Brock, but rather helped him focus.

"Are they ever going to announce the score or not?" muttered Jen.

"The score of what?" asked Brock.

"The Met game," Jen said, sheepishly.

"I didn't know you were a fan."

"Yep. Since I can remember. My grandpa used to take me and my brother to Shea back in the day. I'm a die hard," she said, with a grin.

"Yeah, I'm a Met fan too, Jen. I feel you're pain," Brock said, sarcastically.

"I didn't get to catch last night's game. You see it?"

"Yep. Piazza belted two homers, but we still lost."

"Shocking," groaned Jen.

"At least the youngsters looked good."

"Yeah..."

Sensing an awkward pause in the conversation, Brock tried to make his move.

"Say..Jen?"

"What's up?"

"I've been meaning to ask you something."

"Sure, Brock, what is it?" Jen asked.

"Do you think maybe you...well if you're not too busy...could show me how the copier in the supply room works.?"

"Oh," she said, a bit surprised. "Sure. No problem."

"Great," groaned Brock, disappointed with himself.

---

Boro Park, Brooklyn

This was not the way Joe Stiletti wanted to start his day.

The office was filthy. A messy desk by the windows, a drab old sofa along one wall, and file cabinets along the other. In the corner of the office, a rather malodorous stench emanated from the small bathroom, the door to which had been broken during the previous night's events.

Stiletti had just arrived at the scene. Making his way through the jungle of badges scattered around the office, he spotted Bennett surveying the damage by the window. He stood beside his partner, but didn't bother exchanging pleasantries as his eyes came to rest on the reason that a couple of dozen NYPD-affiliated men and women had gathered in this dirty little Brooklyn office.

He spied a man positioned on his knees, his chest leant against the wall. It only got worse as the veteran detective's eyes went up. The man's head lay, smashed through the window pane, on the window sill itself. Shards of glass littered the floor around the man's body, while others stuck out obscenely from his head. His peyos hung across his face, drenched in his blood, as was his beard. Droplets of blood scattered the area, while a pool of them had dried inside the man's yarmulka, which lay overturned just by the man's head.

{peyos: long, curled sideburns worn by religious Jews

yarmulka: a skullcap worn by religious Jews

---for those not familiar with Jewish customs...Eric}

Stiletti could feel the egg McMuffin he'd eaten earlier that morning rising up his throat, but he turned away and shook it off. It wasn't the first time he'd seen something like this, and he knew it wouldn't be the last, but it was never easy.

"You think this is our friend's handiwork?" asked Bennett, nudging his partner.

"Probably."

"Well, it might be easier to find this guy. Maybe there's a connection between this guy and the others."

"Maybe. Maybe it's as seemingly random as the others, though. It's a tossup," sighed Stiletti.

"Well, I can already tell you the guy was a rather shady businessman. Yossil Rabinowitz. Son of a rabbi. Made his green in real estate. Very likely that the guy had some enemies," said Bennett, thumbing through a folder he'd swiped of the victim's desk.

"Very likely indeed, Dwayne, but those kind of enemies don't usually do this. Maybe in some areas of business, but no matter how dirty this guy was, I doubt he was low enough where someone decided to do this to him."

"I see your point."

"I don't think this was business. This kinda job? You kiddin' me? Just like the others, too. All brutal. All painful. All beat downs. This wasn't business. This was personal," explained Stiletti. "They're all personal."

"Most people don't have this many personal problems, Joe."

"Whoever is behind this, pal... this ain't most people. This..."

"This is one sick motherfucker," Bennett mumbled.

"You said it."

"So what are we gonna do 'bout this poor son of a bitch?" asked Bennett, motioning to the corpse a few feet behind them.

"Let's get back to the station and start diggin' up everything on this Yossil guy we can find."

"Speaking of sons of bitches..." began Bennett, glaring across the room.

Stiletti followed his partner's eyes and spotted a portly, balding man. He groaned and rolled his eyes, dreading what he knew would be the inevitable.

"The countdown begins. 5...4...3..." counted Bennett, sarcastically.

"Gentlemen," the man said as he walked over to them.

"Morning," muttered Stiletti.

"Hey, Carl."

Carl Gainey, chief of detectives for the NYPD, and the two detectives with whom he stood were far from friends. Gainey resented the two for their rise up the proverbial ladder in the NYPD, while Stiletti and Bennett yearned for a boss who would allow them to operate with more freedom than they were allowed under Gainey. They had respect for each other as professionals, but on a personal level, they just didn't care for each other.

"Gentlemen... this is not what I was expecting from you. I expected results, not body bags."

"Listen, Gainey, we've been doing the best we can. We've been working WAY overtime on this. So far, we just don't have a single freakin' lead. This rabbit hole goes deep, and it's going to take a lot of work and a lot of time to find just how deep."

"That's fine and dandy, Joe, but it ain't good enough for my boss. That means it's not good enough for me, either."

"We're not psychic, Carl. We're doing everything we can. What else do you want?" asked Bennett.

"I want the person or people responsible for this shit behind bars! Do you understand? Now I don't care how you do it or what you do. Just do it!" barked Gainey.

"Look, Gainey, you wanna give this case to someone else? FINE. Be my guest. I don't need this fuckin' shit. Neither does Dwayne. You gave this to us because you know we're best for it. I already told you; we're doing everything we can. I can't guarantee you that this guy won't kill again, but I can guarantee you that we WILL find him. It just might not be today or tomorrow... but we will find him, and we'll find him sooner than later. Now why don't you go back to your cushy office and let us do our damn jobs, all right?" retorted Stiletti.

"... Just get back to work, will you?" yelled Gainey, mumbling frustratedly as he walked away from the pair.

"Come on, buddy, let's go. We got a rabbit hole to climb through," Bennett said, with a sigh.

---

Perched atop the roof of a relatively small building, it stared across the street at the precinct station. The two detectives arrived back at their office, no doubt to continue the investigation.

*"They are beginning to formulate ideas. They will only be furthered by whatever they learn about last night's victim."*

It watched as they entered the station and ascended toward their office.

*"This might pose a problem", it thought. "They cannot be allowed to discover the truth. Not yet, anyway. No... they must be delayed..."*

*"They must be thrown of the course. They will not stand in our way.. 'Daddy' hasn't been punished enough yet..."*

Grinning devilishly, Carnage disappeared from the rooftop, prepared to set his plans into motion.

---

Work had been pretty good that day, but Brock Edwards was happy to be home. He walked through the door of the coffee shop, hoping for meal before he went upstairs and relaxed.

"Afternoon, Brock. What can i get you?" asked Irene, the waitress.

"Oh, hey Irene. A bagel with cream cheese would be nice. So, how are you?"

"Fine, thanks. Same ol', same ol'. You know."

Brock and Irene continued to make small talk as she brought him a large bagel. Their light conversation was interrupted as Tom McGeery made his way into the small eatery.

"Hey Brock! How's life on the job?"

"Pretty good, my friend. Typical day, really. Nothing special."

"So... did you put the moves on that young lady you've had your eye on yet?" asked Tom, slyly.

"No. Not yet," Brock sighed.

"I hate to rag on you pal, but the way you talk about this girl, I'm almost ready to ask her out myself. So you better get a move on," Tom joked. "I'm just joking of course, but I think the sooner you get it out of the way, the better."

"I tried today. I was this close... but I couldn't get the words to come out."

"Well what did you end up saying?" asked Tom.

"I... I asked her to show me how the copy machine worked."

Tom and Irene both had a good chuckle, but curbed their enthusiasm, not looking to hurt the man's feelings.

"Well," began Irene, "I think you should go for it. She'd be lucky to have a nice guy like you, Brock."

"Thanks, Irene. I appreciate it. I suppose I should just be a man and do it."

"Yeah. No sense in making a huge deal out of it. Just ask her out on a date. That's all. Just be yourself," Tom said, encouragingly.

Irene nodded. "Just speak from the heart, and I'm sure it'll work out. After all, you did say that you got along nicely at the office, right?"

"Oh yeah, definitely. She's always very friendly, and so am I. At least I think so. We always chat in the morning, and she always flashes me her smile. I think she likes me, but I don't know if she likes me in that way."

"Oh, now stop acting like a teenager Brock. Just be an adult about it. Ask her out."

Brock felt embarrassed before Tom had even spoken. He was acting like a lovesick teenager. A bit of an odd way for a man who used to be a psychopathic maniacal murderer to act. The feeling, however, wasn't that bad. It was nice. Nice to act like a normal guy. That's what he had been, once. What he'd always wanted to be. It's what he was becoming again. He'd never wanted to kill people. He never wanted to become a killer. It was certainly difficult to rationalize his life, but he felt like the man he once was again. He felt normal. It felt... good.

Settling on that, he decided that he should indeed act like an adult about the situation. The normal, upstanding adult that he had been once. That he would be again.

"You guys are right. Tomorrow, I'll ask Jen out. She'll say yes, or she'll say no. Either way, that's life. It's better than nothing."

"You're startin' to come around, my friend. That you are," Tom said, with a grin.

"This bagel is delicious, by the way..."

---

Midtown, Manhattan

The tall skyscraper shimmered in the New York night sky. At its peak, a logo lit up all four sides of the engineering masterpiece that had a featured spot among the Big Apple's revered skyline.

'ASW' in big, bright neon green letters shone over Manhattan island. Standing for All-Star Wrestling, the logo signified the building as the headquarters of the international sports-



entertainment phenomenon. The wrestling company was immensely successful, and generated immense profits.

Sitting literally atop the empire that he had built, Stan Rockman relaxed at the desk in his enormous office that occupied one of the top floors of the skyscraper. Rockman had started this company himself, and using savvy marketing techniques, had become a very rich man thanks to it.

Most recently, however, Stan Rockman had not been in a very good move. His company's brand name was in the headlines, but for all the wrong reasons. Sure, ASW had certainly seen its fair share of bad press. If there was some sort of group organized by parents in this country, they'd probably attacked ASW in some way. Those kind of social or political battles, however, certainly paled in comparison to what had transpired recently. No attack on his company by a group of concerned parents could match the kind of wrath he'd been receiving ever since one of his company's biggest stars, his own employee, was the suspect in at least one murder, if not more.

Stan Rockman was not a happy man, and while he was a brilliant businessman, at times his frustration caused him some serious stress.

This was one of those times.

At the moment, he'd sat at his desk and lit an expensive cigar. He tried to relax. He'd gotten ASW out of public jams before, and he'd do it again. He and his company always persevered, and always came out in one piece, more or less.

Taking a final, long puff of the cigar, he walked over to his bar. He ached to wash the cigar down with a touch of scotch. As he poured himself a drink, he began to notice an usual red tint that had overcast his office. He began to turn around, but before he could even fully complete the motion, he heard the glass breaking. The bottle shattering. He felt a sudden surge of pain in his head.

For a moment, all he saw was red. He felt a pain shoot across his body the likes of which he'd never felt before in his entire life. He tried to scream, but nothing came out. The redness overwhelmed him. In seconds, he gasped, and then it everything turned black.

Within seconds, two large men in suits rushed into the office. Highly trained bodyguards. Highly paid, as well.

As they entered the office, they knew they'd be looking for new jobs.

Their boss was dead, his assailant nowhere to be found.

The Carnage had been done.

It was almost time for lunch, and Brock Edwards felt awful. He'd gotten barely any work done all morning. It was hard to do anything when the object of his affections sat just three feet away. What kind of message was he sending to his boss? This had to stop. Brock tried not to stare at her as she typed away on her computer. He remembered the chat he had had the previous night with his friend Tom.

*"Be a man, Brock. Just do it. Come on. Get it over with. Stop acting like a pre-teen girl,"* he told himself as he felt a couple beads of sweat roll down his forehead. *"Fine... ok... here goes..."*

"Hey Jen... what are you up to?" he asked, getting the young woman's attention.

She glanced up at him, and smiled. "Oh, I'm just editing an article I wrote. It's about the city's teachers. A lot of them aren't doing their jobs very well, or just aren't qualified in the first place."

"I see. That must really hit home with you, being a mom and all."

"Yes, it really does. I'm a little worried about my daughter's education," Jen said.

"How old is she?"

"Tracy is six," Jen answered, proudly.

"Oh, so she started school already."

"Yep. She's in first grade."

"A tough year," Brock responded, jokingly.

"Very. She's learning how to spell."

"Listen, Jen..." began Brock.

"What's up?" Jen asked, looking at him intently.

"Umm, do you think maybe you'd want to go get a drink sometime, or... maybe catch a movie or something."

Jen leaned back, a slightly surprised look on her face. "You mean, like, on a date?"

"Yeah. I guess so," Brock replied, sheepishly. "I mean, we don't have to call it a date if you don't want to. Whatever."

"I see..."

"Hey, if you don't want to or you're not comfortable dating someone from your job or something, that's fine. I understand."

"No, no. I.. I guess we can go out. Sure," Jen said.

"Really?"

"Yep. It's a date."

"Great. It's... a date," Brock mumbled, grinning from ear to ear.

Suddenly both noticed that the office had become eerily quiet. It caused both Jen and Brock to turn around, only to see the rest of their co-workers staring at them. A couple walked over to Sheila Walcetti, the jovial middle-aged woman who was always stirring something fun up at the office, and handed her money.

"Haha," laughed Sheila, "and you guys said it wouldn't happen." She glanced over at Brock and Jen and gave them a wink. "Thanks, you two. I'm raking it in."

"SHEILA!" yelled Jen, a small smile forming on her blushing red face.

"Sorry, honey, but there was money to be made and I've got mouths to feed. You two, however... you two go out. Have a good time. Enjoy yourselves. Come back, maybe fill me in on the juicy details. I might pull in some of these suckers for round two," Sheila said, laughing even louder.

Jen and Brock just looked at each other and rolled their eyes.

---

"Who was that?" asked Detective Bennett, as his partner hung up the phone.

Stiletti and Bennett sat in their office, reviewing all the information they'd managed to gather relating to the murders of Yossil Rabinowitz and Stan Rockman, trying to find a connection between them and the previous victims of what they had begun to regard as a serial killer.

"That was Morris from the lab."

"Oh yeah? What'd he have to say?"

"Well, it seems as they found drops of that same shit by Rockman and Rabinowitz," said Stiletti.

"You mean that gooey substance they found by the others?"

"Yep."

"Shit."

"What color was it this time?"

"Rockman's was red, but Rabinowitz's was black."

"Great. Just great..."

"I think we both realize what this means, Dwayne."

"I think so too..."

"This isn't just some regular psycho. This is one of the special sorts. This is some messed up super-freak. Or more than one."

"Fuck."

"My thoughts exactly," Stiletti said, flopping into the chair at his desk.

"Who could it be though, Joe?"

"I don't know man, I don't know..." his words trailed off as he glanced at a copy of that morning's Daily Bugle lying on his desk.

"I don't know, Dwayne... but I think I may have just gotten a pretty good idea."

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## A TASTE OF VENOM

Things couldn't be going better for Brock Edwards. He's been busy, and he's got himself a date. Venom and Carnage have both been busy, too. How will Brock fare on his first foray back into the realm of romance? Who will the symbiotes slaughter next? With the pressure mounting and the body bags piling up, will the pair of detectives get to the bottom of the biggest killing spree to hit the Big Apple in years? Can they put a stop to the madness? The story continues to unravel next issue, so be back here for part 3 of "Serial Tendencies" in Venom #6!!!

It was getting late, and she was tired.

Sitting at the table in the largest room of her loft, one that served as not only the living room, but also a kitchen and dining area, she took her glasses off and rubbed her eyes. She'd been working all night, but still wasn't done.

She needed a break.

Though she was tired, she knew she wouldn't be able to fall asleep. She thought about joining her long-time boyfriend, who was fast asleep in the bedroom, but decided against it.

She stood up gingerly from the chair, and reached for the small lamp that stood on the table, illuminating the several stacks of paper that she had been working with. She flicked the switch and turned it off.

It was dark now, as she stood beside the table, feeling a bit chilly in her flannel pajama pants and old T-shirt. After a moment, she slowly walked toward the couch, deciding to curl up under a blanket and watch some TV.

She grabbed the remote control from the long wooden coffee table that stood in between her couch and television, and turned the set on. She flipped through the channels for a bit, stopping for a minute to watch an infomercial about a blender, before moving on and finally settling on an old romantic comedy.

She spent a good twenty minutes watching the film, paying just enough attention to continue following the movie's generic plot. Her thoughts were muddled. Work had been hell recently, and she'd been having problems with her man, too.

She decided to stop thinking about it and to relax, and tried to immerse herself in the movie. Before long though, she began to feel especially chilly. Too lazy to go and get a sweater, she just wrapped the blanket that she'd been lying under even tighter around her lithe body.

As she finished adjusting her position on the couch, she felt something disturbing. The tiny hairs on the back of her neck stood up, and she felt like her entire body was covered in goose bumps.

Just as she felt it, she jumped suddenly as she heard her boyfriend's voice from the other side of the room, behind her. She heard him scream out her name in a panic!

"April!" he yelled.

She felt like she heard his wail for hours, but it was only a second, and in an instant, she snapped her head around and looked to the other end of the room, where his voice had come from.

"Oh my God..." she said, so frightened that it was only as loud as a whisper.

As she stood up from the couch, she saw his body lying beside the table at which she had sat just a few minutes earlier. He was on the floor, face down, a growing pool of blood under him.

Watching the dark red liquid spread across her wooden floor toward where she stood, she slowly began to back away. After just one step, though, she felt that same feeling on the back of her neck. She slowly turned around, and as her eyes took in the sight in front of her, she felt like they were about to roll into the back of her head.

It was horrible, and it was terrifying, and it was like nothing she'd ever seen before. There were no words for it, and she crumbled to the floor beneath her, her knees buckling as if they were made of jelly.

She tried not to look at it...at that thing, as it towered over her, breathing loudly, almost panting. And that facial expression that it had...if you could even call that a face...it was awful. Like an animal, though one not of this Earth.

She felt the tears begin to stream down her face, her body slowly moving lower and lower. Instinctively, she began to curl up into the fetal position as the creature began to descend upon her.

"No," she tried to scream, but again it only came out as faint as a whisper. She cursed herself. She had to scream. Maybe someone would hear her, it was the only chance she had. She had to scream. Her building had pretty thin walls. Someone was bound to hear.

She opened her mouth, but before she could scream, she felt herself being covered in something. She didn't know what it was, and she couldn't describe it. The texture of it, the way it felt...it was the most disgusting thing she'd ever experienced.

She tried, in vain, to cry out.

But it wasn't a bloodcurdling scream that filled the walls of the Manhattan loft.

Just the sickening crack of a neck being broken, and a dying breath.

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MARVEL 2000 PRESENTS

# VENOM

#6 - "SERIAL TENDENCIES"

Part III: Love and Death

Written by Eric Fayeberg

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"Fucking shit," moaned Carl Gainey to himself, as he glanced at the crime scene. The chief of detectives for the NYPD had already had a lousy morning, and this didn't make it any better.

Yet another in the string of serial killer styled murders that had been plaguing New York of late, and still he had no good news to report to his superiors. No leads at all.

Worse yet, this meant he was going to have to talk to the two bums that he was forced to assign to this killing spree, Stiletti and Bennett. Despite their track record, Gainey couldn't stomach either.

This whole situation was just totally fucked up, and Gainey didn't know how much more of it he could take.

As he scratched the back of his head, an officer approached him.

"What is it, Dodson?" Gainey asked in an annoyed tone.

"You told me to let you know when Detectives Bennett and Stilletti were here. Well, they're on their way up, Chief," said Dodson.

"All right... thanks. Now go get me a cup of coffee."

"Sure, sir. I'll be right back," Dodson said, before walking away with his new assignment.

Staring at the body again, Gainey adjusted his tie and fixed his hair. He kept staring until he heard footsteps approaching him.

"Hey, Chief. Hot date?"

"Real funny, Bennett. Real funny. How about you stop goofing around and do your job. You know, that detective work thing. It's kinda what the people of this city pay you for," exclaimed Gainey angrily.

"Yeah? Then what is it they pay you for?" mumbled Detective Joe Stiletti, standing behind his partner, Dwayne Bennett.

"What was that, Stiletti?" yelled Gainey.

"Nothing, boss. I was just mentioning that we think we have something," explained Stiletti.

"You do? Well, don't just stand there, man. Let's hear it!"

"Why don't you tell us what the deal is here first?" asked Bennett.

"All right. Fine. Boyfriend and girlfriend. Looks like the female was the intended target. The boyfriend might just have been here at the wrong time."

"How do you know she was the target?" Stiletti wondered.

Gainey pointed toward the body lying beside where he stood. "Positioning of the body. We also found traces of some kind of substance near her. With the boyfriend, it seemed like a careless blow. As if he was just a diversion or something, I don't know."

"What kind of substance?"

"We don't know yet. The lab is working on it."

"Was it the same substance as in the other killings?" Bennett probed.

"I have no idea, damn it!" yelled Gainey. "I told you, the damn lab results aren't in yet!"

"All right, all right. Calm down, boss," said Stiletti, quietly. "What's the info on the woman?"

"Her name's April Maye," Gainey said, his voice at a normal volume again.

Bennett smirked. "You're kidding, right? What kind of name is that? What was she, a stripper?"

"Not even close. It's a stupid name, granted, but she was no stripper. She's a reporter. Was, anyway."

"What paper?" Stiletti followed up.

"Freelance," fired back Gainey.

"Hmm..."

Gainey looked at Stiletti, not amused in the least.

"What? What's the matter?" he asked.

"It's just interesting that she's a reporter."

"Why? Does that mean something? What is this lead that you've got, anyway? I'm tired of talking here. I want to hear it. Spill," demanded Gainey.

"I was looking at a copy of the Bugle the other day, and I kept thinking about that weird liquid shit they found by the bodies..."

"Whoa! Wait a minute!" interrupted Gainey. "I told you, I don't want to hear about that nonsense. That freakin' crap doesn't mean anything!"

"Hold on, Chief," Bennett said, "just hear us out."



"Yeah," said Stiletti. "Anyway, I was thinkin' about that, and I got an idea. So I grabbed all the info on all the murders and Dwayne and me spent hours and fucking hours doing research. We think we found a connection."

"What kind of connection?" Gainey asked, suspiciously.

"Okay, well, let's start with that guy in Alphabet City. James Benjamin. Worked two jobs. You know, middle-aged guy in the projects, trying to get by. A few years back though, when he was a little younger, he served time. Mugged a guy, roughed him up good."

"And?" asked Gainey.

"Hold the phone, boss. Let Joe finish," said Bennett, patting Gainey on the shoulder.

"Next, that guy out in Brooklyn. Tobbler," continued Stiletti. "He used to work car service with a guy who just happens to be the guy that got mugged by Benjamin. And that Jew, the one also in Brooklyn the other day? Down in Boro Park? Yeah, he's big into real estate. All over the city this guy owns or has owned property. He was a piece of shit as a man, and as a landlord. One of his tenants just happens to be the guy who got mugged by Benjamin, and who used to work car service with Tobbler."

"So who the fuck is this guy?"

"Name's Eddie Brock."

"Who is he? What have you got on him?"

"Who is he?" asked Bennett, with a laugh. "Ever hear of Venom?"

"What?" Gainey asked. Carl Gainey had a short temper, and these two always managed to push his buttons. He was getting pissed off, big time.

"Venom," said Stiletti. "As in Venom, maniac enemy of Spider-Man, responsible for plenty of innocent deaths."

Stiletti and Bennett both looked at Gainey, proud of themselves for the research that they had done. Gainey's facial expression, however, did not turn into the smile that they had hoped to see. Instead, his face became very red, and he looked angrier than ever.

"Are you morons out of your skulls? Have you lost it? Venom! Spider-Man! Get the hell out of here with your Venom bullshit! This isn't no Spider-Man villain. If this had anything to do with Spider-Man, then that costumed moron would have stuck his nose in it already, and probably stopped it. Besides, how do you explain the wrestling company owner, and the wrestler's wife and neighbor? Huh? Don't got an answer for that, do you?"

"No, we haven't figured out the connection to that yet, but that liquid shit was at all the murders. And that's what Venom wore, some weird liquid costume or some shit like that."

"I've had just about enough of this," bellowed Gainey. "I want you bastards to get the hell out of here and do some real work. Stop coming to me with this super villain nonsense. I'm sick of it!"

"But..."

"Damn it, I said get out of here! Now!"

Stiletti and Bennett stared at Gainey, and then looked at each other. Finally, they both just sighed, and walked away.

Gainey shook his head, sighing himself. He watched them leave, and then turned back toward the body, and knelt beside it, continuing to examine it.

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"So what are your plans for the big date?"

"Oh, I don't know, Tom. I guess I'll take her out to dinner, and then I'm thinking maybe we'll go to one of those quaint little jazz lounges or something. Have some nice music in the background, meanwhile we can just talk and get to know each other better," explained Brock to his friend, Tom McGeery.

"Sounds good to me," replied Tom, taking a bite of the candy bar that he was eating.

He enjoyed the chocolate candy as Brock and he walked down a small side street on the Lower East Side, in Manhattan. They were returning home after taking a short walk to a clothing store, where Brock had picked up some nice clothes, which he planned on wearing on his date with his co-worker, Jen Leery.

They had walked in silence for just over a block, when Tom resumed the conversation.

"You know, Brock, I know you've been kind of secretive about your past, and I certainly respect that. If you don't want to talk about it, that's your business, and I don't plan to pry. But I don't know much about your history with the ladies, practically none of it, in fact, so I don't know if this is going to mean anything to you. If it's not something you need to hear, then you just say the word, but I just want to offer you a piece of advice."

"I'm sure whatever it is, I'll be glad to hear it. By all means, please go ahead."

"All right. Well, you really seem to like this girl, Brock. From what you've told me about her, she does seem like a nice girl. Thing is...you've gotta be careful. I mean, she's probably had some kinda tough experience with a guy, her being such a young single mom, after all."

"Yeah," Brock said, a bit saddened by the thought. "I haven't really asked her about that, but that's probably the case."

"Well, I'm just saying... don't push her too hard, you know? You probably need to take it slow. Unless, of course, she doesn't want to. She's gotta make that clear to you, though."

"Well, I'm not exactly a teenager, Tom. You've got a few years on me, but I'm old enough to know all about that," said Brock, with a smirk.

"Haha," laughed Tom, "I know you are, son, I'm just trying to help. I hope it works out with you two, you could use a nice girl in your life. Stop spending so much time with me and Irene down at the coffee shop."

"Good point," Brock said, sarcastically. "I do enjoy your company, Tom, and Irene is a good woman, too. But you're right; I could definitely use a nice girl in my life."

"You take it easy with her, and turn on that charm. I'm sure she'll melt right in your hands," said Tom.

"I hope so," Brock said, swinging the bag with his clothes around his hand.

"By the way. Her having a kid... you're okay with that?" asked Tom, trying to broach the subject subtly.

"Yeah, I guess. Why?"

"Well, Brock, I don't know. I guess...just...that's a tough thing for a little kid who has a single parent, when their parents are dating. So if it ever gets serious between you and this woman, your relationship isn't just going to affect two people, but three. You've gotta remember that."

"Yeah, I know. I've thought about it, and I don't think it'll be a problem. The way I like Jen, there's no way I could ever treat her daughter badly or something like that."

"Good," said Tom, giving Brock a good pat across the back. "Well that's real good. Then I guess all I can say is good luck, huh?"

"Yeah, guess so. Thanks, Tom."

"No problem, kid."

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"Man, can you believe how fucking stubborn Gainey is?" Detective Dwayne Bennett asked his partner.

"Uh...yeah? This isn't the first time we've had to deal with Gainey, Dwayne. You shouldn't be surprised. I'm not," said Joe Stiletti, while throwing a dart from his hand into the dartboard that hung on the wall across the room.

The two detectives were sitting in their office; papers scattered all over the place. While Stiletti flung darts at the small board that a fellow detective had once given him as a gift quite a few years ago, Bennett bounced a blue ball off of the wall beside him. Trying to find a way out of their predicament, they were running out of ideas.

"What are we gonna do, Joe?"

"I don't know, Dwayne. I know this has something to do with this Brock guy, I just know it."

"So do I, man. We ain't gonna be able to convince Gainey, though."

"The only choice we have is to prove it."

"Yeah, right. Easier said than done, man. How the hell you expect to do that?" asked Bennett.

Stiletti simply shook his head back and forth and shrugged. "I don't know man, I have no clue."

"Well, we can't just sit here. We've got to do something. Try something else."

"What do you suggest? We've followed the other murders as far as we can."

"There's gotta be a lead somewhere," muttered Bennett.

"Our only lead is this April Maye broad."

"Man, what were her parents thinking," Bennett said, with a chuckle. "So why aren't we following that up yet?"

"We still need all the info. I asked Jerry to get it for us. When he does, then we can get to work."

As Stiletti finished the thought, the detectives heard a sharp knock on their office door.

"Speak of the devil," Stiletti said. "Come on in!"

The door opened, and a man of about thirty walked in, holding a manila folder.

"Hey, Dwayne. Here, Joe. This is the file you asked for on the Maye case. Hope it helps," said Jerry, as he handed the folder to Stiletti.

"So do I. Thanks, Jerry."

"No prob," Jerry said, as he left the room and shut the door behind him.

"Good guy, that Jerry," commented Dwayne, as Stiletti looked through the file's contents.

Stiletti nodded in agreement. "Yeah, he is."

"So what do you see? Anything useful?"

"Not ye...wait, wait, wait! Yes! This might be what we're looking for!" Stiletti exclaimed.

"What? What is it?" asked Bennett, excitedly.

"Gainey said that this Maye broad was a freelance reporter, right?"

"Yeah. So?"

"Well she is a freelance reporter. Now. She wasn't always freelance, though."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean she used to work for one paper full-time," said Stiletti. "A few years back, April Maye was the top reporter for a little newspaper called the Daily Globe."

"The Daily Globe..." said Bennett, his thought trailing off.

"Yep. The very same Daily Globe where a man named Eddie Brock used to work," said Stiletti, a smile growing on his lips.

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"Anyway, thanks for coming to Coal Train. I'll be back with your drinks in a bit," said the waitress, with a smile, before turning toward the bar and walking away.

Coal Train was a small little jazz club in Greenwich Village. It had a real nice atmosphere to it. The lights were dimmed, and the music was nice, but not too loud. It was a perfect place for two people to spend a nice evening getting to know each other.

Brock moved toward the small table as Jen Leery closed her cell phone, and put it back in her purse.

"Who was that?" asked Brock.

"Oh, I was just checking in on Tracy," Jen explained, referring to her six year old daughter.

"Ah, I see. Where is she tonight? Who's watching her?"

"She's at home. I've got the woman from next door, Mrs. BurtonsSmith watching her. Sometimes when I'm really desperate for a sitter, she helps me out. She's a nice, older woman. A little bit crazy, but nice."

"Well, that's good. It's nice to know that I was enough for you to be desperate," Brock said, jokingly. Jen just smiled at him.

"I really enjoyed dinner, Brock. That restaurant was really cute. I can't believe I've never been there before," said Jen, as she watched Brock sit down in the small semicircular booth at the back of the lounge where their waitress had brought them.

"Yeah, it was my first time there, too. It was better than I could have hoped," said Brock with a grin, as Jen followed him into the booth. She slid over close to him, almost surprising him, and he slid his arm around her back and rested his hand on her shoulder.

The booth's seat was soft, covered in a velvet-like fabric, and very comfortable. Brock and Jen relaxed into the seat as they talked, enjoying the three-piece jazz band on the stage.

"I'm glad you enjoyed dinner. I was kind of nervous about it, to be honest."

"You shouldn't be, Brock. I really did, it was very nice. I haven't been out on such a nice date in a while. Then again, I haven't been out on many dates in general lately," said Jen, rolling her eyes.

"Well," began Brock, sliding just an inch closer to Jen, "I'm having an even better time than I imagined, if that's possible. So I'm hoping that means we'll do this again. If you want to, that is."

"Yeah," whispered Jen, "it looks like that's probably going to happen. If things keep going the way they are...that is," she said, smiling slyly at Brock.

"That makes me really happy, Jen. I can't believe how things worked out, with me getting a job at the Crier, and being lucky enough to get to have my desk be right by yours. Maybe it's fate."

"Maybe. It is kind of weird how it all happened, I guess. You just show up and before you know it, we're out on a date, and I'm having more fun than I've had in a long time."

Brock smiled at her, and brushed a strand of hair away from her face and behind her ear. "It's been a lot longer for me, Jenny. Believe me."

"Why are you so mysterious, Brock Edwards? What's your story? You're so upbeat, and you're such a nice guy all the time, but somehow I feel like part of you is really, really sad. What's the deal?" asked Jen, softly.

"I don't think it's a good idea to talk about that right now. It's a really long story, Jen, and if I get into it now, it'll just ruin the evening. Besides, I don't want to be a downer, but sometimes I think you're kind of the same way."

"What do you mean, Brock?"

"I mean... you're such a sweet person all the time, but sometimes I think that you're really hurting inside. I really hope you aren't though, because that makes me really sad. You're way too good of a person to have to feel that way."

"Thanks, Brock. Maybe you're right. Maybe we shouldn't talk about this tonight. I'm sorry I brought it up."

"That's okay, I understand. I just hope it doesn't bother you. You know, that you think I'm mysterious or whatever it is."

"No, it doesn't bother me," she said. "Actually, I kind of like it. There's something...sexy about it."

"Really?" asked Brock, a hint of surprise in his voice.

"Yeah," Jen purred, as she wrapped Brock's arm tighter around herself, and moved right up next to him, resting her head on his shoulder.

"That's...good..." Brock said, his voice barely audible. He took his hand from her shoulder, and gently brushed her hair with his fingers.

"Yeah," Jen responded with a whisper.

"I...really like you Jen," said Brock. "I...I'm sorry, maybe I shouldn't have said that. I'm sorry, I'm being too forward," he followed, nervously.

Jen raised her head from his shoulder and looked up at him. She put her small left hand on Brock's right cheek, and rubbed his face for a moment, before pulling herself up and gently kissing him, first on the cheek, and then full on the lips.

Brock looked at her, right into her eyes, and felt a feeling that he hadn't felt in a very long time. It felt distant, strange, but yet somehow familiar. He stared at her for a moment, before burying his lips into hers for another kiss, this one far deeper.

"Mmm..." Jen moaned, and Brock responded in kind.

The kiss lasted for a few more seconds, before they both reluctantly let go.

"That...that was...great," said Brock, a tad flustered.

"Yeah...it was. Maybe...Maybe we should get out of here," Jen said, cautiously.

"Are you sure?" asked Brock.

"Yes, I am. I'm sure," she said, fluttering her eyelashes.

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"Yeah, yeah. I got it. Thanks a lot. Yeah. I understand, don't worry. Your name will never be mentioned. I know. I got it. I swear. All right. Listen, thanks. Thanks a lot. We're even now."

Joe Stiletti hung up the phone and sat back in his chair, reclining as far as the chair allowed. He let out a long sigh, and turned to his partner, Dwayne Bennett, who walked into the room holding a few folders.

"Who was that?" asked Bennett.

"I've got this buddy, real close friend from way, way back. Like a childhood friend. I probably mentioned him to you before. Anyway, this guy works for the FBI. And before that, he worked all over the government agencies."

"Uh-huh. I think I remember you telling me about him once or twice."

"Right. So this guy owes me a couple of favors. I just gave him a call, and cashed in all those favors for one big one."

"What did you get him to do?"

"He made a few calls for me. Asked a few questions. As long as I promised to make sure no matter what that I would never mention his name in regards to it."

"What is it he found out?" Bennett asked.

"Guess who is officially rehabilitated, and just recently became a free man?"

"Who?"

"Eddie Brock," said Stiletti, a sense of satisfaction sweeping over him. "As part of a secret agreement or something like that, no less."

---

"I'm sorry the apartment is such a mess. I haven't even been here for that long, since right around when I started at the City Crier," said Brock, as he turned his key and unlocked the door to his apartment.

"Well, it's real great that you found a place so soon and managed to settle in," replied Jen, as she clung to his back and gripped his free hand with one of her own.



"It's nothing special. It's kind of small, and it needs some work, but the landlord is a great guy. The only real friend I've got right now. Except for you and the gang at the paper," he said, as he opened the door and led Jen in behind him.

"That's good," she answered, closing the door with one arm, while kissing Brock on the cheek.

Brock smiled, and turned back toward Jen, wrapping one arm around her waist, and bringing the other up to cup the side of her face. "Now, where were we?"

She kissed him hard, and pushed her small body into his large frame. He staggered a bit, and backed up against the wall, taking her with him.

She tied her hands behind his neck, and pulled his head down towards her. He did as she wanted, and kept the kiss going. She let him take control.

"Oh, Jenny," he moaned, and she responded in kind.

He backed up from the wall and picked her up into his arms as she wrapped her legs around his lower back, slipping off her heels and letting them drop to the floor.

Brock began to move toward his bedroom with Jen in his arms, kissing her as he walked. With one arm, he swiped at the door, moving it aside, and laid her down across his bed, and himself beside her.

He kissed her again, and from her lips he moved his own downward, to her neck. She reveled in the sensation as he bit the nape of her neck, but then she kissed him again, and proceeded to roll over on top of him.

Brock lay on his back, looking up at the woman who sat on top of him. He felt better than he ever had in his entire life. It was incredible.

He moved his arms to try and bring her down for a kiss, but she stopped him. She smiled at him, and slowly gripped the bottom of the tight blouse that she was wearing, and in the sultriest of manners, brought it up over her head. Slipping it off, she threw it haphazardly across the bed. As he ran his strong hands up the soft, smooth skin of her back, she let out a groan, and bent down to meet his lips with her own in their most passionate kiss yet.

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"Tracy," screamed Mrs. Burtonsmith, "stop running around this apartment! You get back here this instant. You should have been in bed hours ago, young lady."

When six-year-old Tracy Leery didn't respond, her babysitter got up from the sofa in Jennifer Leery's apartment, and went about trying to find the child.

"This is no time to play hide and seek, Tracy. It's the middle of the night, darn it, and your mother should be home soon, and she is going to be very, very disappointed with you, young lady."

Searching Jennifer's room, Mrs. Burtonsmith couldn't find the girl anywhere.

"Damn it," she muttered to herself. "I'm too old to be crawling around looking under beds and in closets. Where is that little witch?"

She left the bedroom that belonged to the girl's mother, and quickly checked the bathroom. She pulled the shower curtain aside, but didn't find Tracy there, either.

"Tracy? Where are you? This has gone on long enough. Come here right now, young lady!"

Still unable to find the girl, the older woman proceeded to the child's small bedroom. The door was closed. As she gripped the handle, at first it wouldn't turn.

That struck her as odd, for she had sat for Tracy enough times to know that she didn't have a lock on her door.

Mrs. Burtonsmith applied a little more pressure to the door, and the knob finally turned. As soon as she swung the door open, she was met with a strong, cold gust of wind.

"She must have opened the window all the way," the woman thought. "But how?"

The room was dark, and Mrs. Burtonsmith could see nothing. As she stepped into the room, she flipped the light switch beside her. As the light illuminated the room, she had to grip the dresser that stood behind her, because she would have fallen otherwise.

She thought she was going to faint, or maybe have a heart attack. She wasn't sure which. She found it difficult to breathe as she looked around the room.

All the furniture, and everything else...all of the room's contents...destroyed...as if a hurricane or a tornado had come through the room, wrecking everything in its path.

It wasn't just that, though. The whole room...it was covered in something. Something...red. A lot of it looked like blood, but some of it wasn't the right color to be blood. It was a different shade of red, one like she had never seen before.

She didn't understand. "How did this happen?" she wondered.

As she took it all in, her eyes darting across the room, suddenly they fixated on one spot. The bed. Unlike the rest of the room, the bed remained fairly intact. Even the covers were made. Something about it was odd, though. The covers didn't lie flat on the bed. Perhaps it was pillows. There was definitely something there. Or...someone.

Mrs. Burtonsmith released her grip on the dresser, and gingerly stood up straight. Slowly, she moved herself through the mess that was the room toward the small bed. When she stood beside the bed, she knelt down, her whole body trembling. With shaking hands and eyes closed, she pulled the covers off the bed.

She waited for a moment, and then she couldn't take it anymore. She opened her eyes and gazed at the bed.

The sheets, originally white Powerpuff Girls sheets, were now completely red, drenched in whatever that substance was. Blood...or something else.

In the center of the bed, right where the sheets were darkest, lie the little body of six-year old Tracy Leery. The lifeless little body of Tracy Leery.

The older woman felt her eyes tear up, and felt the salty discharge begin seeping through. She slowly moved away from the bed, dropping the blanket that she held to the floor. She stared at the child, and then let her eyes move around the room.

"What could do this? Who could do this?" she asked herself. Or maybe God. She wasn't sure.

"Who could do things like this? Who could be responsible for these kinds of horrors? These kinds of atrocities?" she demanded.

"This kind of...carnage?"

And then, just as the thought formulated in her mind, she suddenly felt something touch her...

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## A TASTE OF VENOM

Yeah, believe it or not, I wrote another issue of Venom. In fact, I'm going to write one, possibly two others after this.

I couldn't get past a horrible case of writer's block that I had with this series, but I overcame it this week, and I got this done. I think it came out a lot better than expected, actually. I hope you all enjoy it. I actually had some fans of this series, so I hope I didn't let you all down.

But, yeah, this series is going to come to an end.

Initially, it was supposed to be an ongoing series, but a long time ago I decided to just make it a mini-series, or maxi-series...whatever you want to call it. I really enjoy writing it, and I've really grown to like Brock Edwards, and all of the little people I've created in his new life, but I just think it would ruin it if I dragged it out, so I'm going to keep it short and sweet.

Don't worry though, I think I'll be picking up some other work here at M2K before long.

Anyway, please please please send me any feedback, either through e-mail, our on the nifty new message board that our esteemed head honcho, Cory Wiegel, has set up for us.

See you next issue!

Brock watched Jen's chest rise and fall as she slept, curled up under his arm. She looked so small lying on his chest. Such a fragile and trusting woman. *How did I ever get so lucky*, Brock thought. He couldn't remember the last time he felt so naturally happy. That was the key. Brock had found this little patch of happiness *himself*. There was nothing alien or induced about it like when the symbiote would tickle his psyche with its horrid manipulations.

Jen was so vulnerable right now. Completely at Brock's mercy. He could and would have done any number of things to her were he still bound to his other. *His other?* Where had *that* thought come from? He hadn't used that identifier since before his therapy.

*There is no other*, Brock told himself. *It's just me. Just Brock Edwards. Well, Eddie Brock is still down there somewhere but he's no threat.*

It would have been so easy for him to--Brock held his breath. A thread-thin, black tendril poked out from under Jen's head. It tapped its way across her cheek. What the hell was going on?

*tap-tap-tap*

The wiggling thread made its way across her porcelain skin. It closed the inches from cheek to mouth. Jen slept with her mouth slightly open and the thread was doing what? Probing? Where the hell had it come from? A pulse later and the thread doubled in size.

*We need to eat, Brock. We cannot go on alone. Let us take this one and we can go--*

"No... no, this ain't possible," Brock whispered. He looked at his hand. His inky, jett-black hand that lay just beyond Jen's head.

"No. Please, no."

*Hush, Eddie. Sleep now.*

*Sleep...*

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MARVEL 2000 PRESENTS

# VENOM

#7 - "SERIAL TENDENCIES"

Part IV: Brutal Honesty

Written by Eric Faynberg & CW Russette

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*Open your eyes, Brock, a voice said.*

His eyes opened. *Wow.* He looked around and recognized his surroundings immediately. He was standing on top of the Empire State Building. To the right, a portion of Madison Square Garden, and New Jersey just past that. The Chrysler building to the left, and across the East River, Queens. Following the river south, he saw where it merged with the Hudson. Lady Liberty was a beautiful sight in the distance.

He had always loved the view from this height. His uncle Jimmy took him up every year as a boy. It was a tradition, one he always looked forward to. Afterwards, his uncle would always say, "All that looking around has made me hungry. 'Bout you, Eddie?" The two would then feast on a great meal. Usually a big, juicy steak.

Even as an adult Brock would occasionally try and catch the view. Work and life didn't always allow that to happen. Like a lot of New Yorkers, Brock sometimes went without actually experiencing some of the best that the Big Apple had to offer. When he did get to the Empire State Building, it always made him happy.

Brock was enjoying some of that happiness lying next to Jen. His moments of real happiness had been few since the creature had grafted itself and its desires to Brock. The symbiote forced Brock to experience elation occasionally through chemical and emotional manipulations when it was pleased or at peace. The creature didn't give a hang about steak and views though. The nights' events were wrought of Brock's decisions. It was all him. Brock was quite happy.

*It's because of me, isn't it, Brock?*

Brock turned to his side. Jen stood before him.

"Yes, of course it's because of you, Jen...but this isn't real, is it?"

*No, it isn't.*

"I'm dreaming, aren't I?" Brock stared at Jen, transfixed by her beauty.

*Yes, you are.* The voice that came from her was changed. It was raspy, horrible, and familiar.

Jen fell away. Brock's head snapped forward. He saw her body plummeting down from the roof of the skyscraper. Tears streamed down his face when he heard the frightening voice again. This time, he recognized the voice all too well.

*Hello, Eddie.*

Brock turned to where Jen had just been standing, now, there was only Venom.

"Why are you here?"

*I'm always here, Eddie. I'm a part of you. I am you.*

"No, no you aren't. You are not me, you're a parasite. You're an animal, a monster."

*While that is true, it changes nothing. We are one, Eddie.*

Brock advanced on the hulking, black and white form. He knew he was out of his league against such a creature but he would be damned if he was just going to let the thing run all over him without putting up a fight.

"No! We are *two!* There is no Venom, alien. There's Brock Edwards and there's the symbiote from planet where-ever. The leech of humans is on it's own. I don't *want* or *need* you anymore!"

What served the symbiote as eyes narrowed. The wicked grin frowned. Brock had forgotten how the alien couldn't handle rejection.

"For the first time since the Sin Eater debacle I am happy again. Not force fed the chemical equivalent of pleasure. I have found happiness in my life. *I* am living *my* life. You aren't part of the equation."

*But **I'm** not happy, Eddie. You've been ignoring me. I've had to make other arrangements to do what had to be done.*

"I don't care. Cut the sad-sack crap. You don't even experience emotions. You feel what I feel and then try to simulate it. You mimic. You copied Parker's powers after you bonded with him. You can no more talk than a chimp. Yer not sad and lonely, yer hungry, alien."

*Fortunately, I found a way to survive, but I'm tired of it. I'm tired of having to function while handicapped. It's time for us to be one again. We need to re-connect, Eddie.*

"We aren't doing anythi--"

Before Brock could finish the sentence, he snapped awake. He was in his bedroom again, standing at the foot of the bed. Instead of having a conversation with Venom, he now faced the writhing red and black form of Carnage.

"What the hell? What are you doing here, Carnage? Where's Venom?"

Carnage's faux grin grew from ear to ear. "What do you mean, *Eddie?* Venom is here," it said, and pointed at Brock.

Brock heard himself gasp as he looked down at his arms. Like prehensile veins the black symbiote interwove then bled across his hands. They wormed their way up his limbs to his chest and down his trunk.

"No..."

"Oh yes, Eddie." Carnage laughed.

Brock looked to the bed. His face contorted. Though he suffered no physical malady he was in agony. He didn't recall ever having been in such pain. Tears were welling up as the familiar second skin, the symbiote, sheathed his head.

*I'm here, Eddie.*

Jen hung feet above the bed. Elongated tendrils of black secured her arms and legs. Except for her nose her face was covered in black. Her nostrils opened and closed rapidly.

"No!" Brock felt that ethereal tendrils of the symbiote probing his mind for a handhold.

*The bonding! You fight becoming **us!** Why Eddie?*

"Leave her alone! She's got nothing to do with this! Damn you!"

"Daddy is hungry, Eddie. Let him feed. The slut isn't worth your time and it isn't like she has a reason to live anymore."

*Let me in, Eddie! Let Venom live!*

"What the hell are you talking about, Carnage?"

Jen moaned and shook violently as the symbiote began pulling her in two different directions.

*Listen to me! I am the voice you must heed. Let me in! Take me back! They **took** you from me! It wasn't my fault!*

Brock cursed. Too much was happening too fast. The alien was going to kill Jen, he had no doubt of that. She was just a meal to it. Carnage was doing his best to distract Brock. Making it easier for the symbiote to worm its way into his mind. Brock seized a hold of the alien's presence so close to the inner circles of his mind and lowered his defenses, slightly. The alien loosened its grip on the woman and surged. Brock heard himself cry out.

"Nice try," Brock said through clenched teeth.

"Well, I was referring to Jen's sweet little daughter, Tracy," Carnage said as he headed for the open window.

"What... about her?" Brock managed.

Jen screamed from beneath her black gag. The alien, frustrated by its denial exerted itself anew. This time it was twisting the woman's upper body to the right, her legs eased to the left.

"No! No! God damn it!"

"Yes, yes, Eddie. I'm afraid so. The wee lass won't be opening any more birthday presents... for the rest of her life." Carnage's mouth turned into a frown all too briefly. "You should have seen the Nanny, though! What a screamer!"



Brock reached for Carnage. The symbiote, spread too thin, peeled away from his muscled limb. Carnage straddled the window-sill. He laced his fingers on his lap and tilted his head at Brock.

"Oh, I think you might want to focus on just one fight at a time, Eddie."

Jen's body continued to contort. She screamed as though she was on fire. Could she hear Carnage? Brock hoped not. He had no choice. The alien had to take precedence. He willed the symbiote to stop its attack.

Nothing. The only way to control the alien was to be one with it and dominate its faculties as it had when they were Venom. He would have to let the symbiote in all the way.

"Come on, Eddie. It's time to do what must be done. You know what you have to do, don't you, Brock? Don't you...Venom?" Carnage winked and disappeared from the window into the night.

"Come on you son of a bitch!" Brock spat and opened his mind.

When the symbiote felt the resistance ebb away it froze for just a moment. The prehensile extensions locked up violently without a care for their captive. It dove into Brock's mind for the prize, like a hawk for a field mouse, oblivious to all else.

Brock watched his happiness disappear in one violent jerk of the woman he had placed in harm's way.

CRAKT!

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"We got a T.O.D., Bobby?" Detective Stiletti asked.

"Not long, Joe." The M.E. opened the elderly woman's mouth and shone a pen light within. "The insects have just found the corpse. They may have been slowed because the vic had all her windows closed and seemed cleaner than most."

"Rigor?" Detective Stiletti asked.

"Not yet. Purple-ish blood and skin color changes say longer than thirty minutes. It was hard to find a big enough piece of her skin to determine that, though."

Stiletti looked around the family room. There were multiple splatter patterns on everything. Hunks and wads of skin were on the ceiling, the floor, the walls, the furniture. The woman's face was found at the base of the TV. The splatter and blood tracks indicated her face had been slapped to the screen and slid off as gravity demanded.

"Without the inset of rigor mortis I'm gonna guess she's only been dead a few hours. I'll know better once I take her temperature."

"Thanks, Bobby." Stiletti headed for his partner.

Detective Dwayne Bennett exited the bed room staring at the floor. Everywhere his eyes fell he found blood. His face was pale. Bennett frowned. It was something Stiletti so rarely saw it angered him. The case was getting to Bennett. It was getting to Stiletti, too, but he hadn't been in the bedroom yet.

"Yer not gonna want to see this, man," Bennett said without making eye contact.

"It's part of the job. I don't expect it to ever get any easier. If I stopped feeling things I'd be one step closer to the bastard that did this. C'mon."

The two detectives entered the bedroom shaking their heads. The furniture was in ruins except for an old dresser. It looked like someone had thrown a tantrum and the weight and size of the room's contents had meant nothing. Centered in the carnage was the bed. The pillows were fluffed and the sole, tiny occupant lay on her back, her hands at her sides. The girl's face was expressionless. There was no sign of strain or struggle. She simply lay there, as though she was just tucked in.

"What's the cause of death?" Stiletti asked. He found it equally hard to look at and away from the youngest victim in his fifteen years on the force.

"Compared to the older woman, this was a clean kill. One puncture wound, right through the front of the chest and out the back. Skewered the heart. She bled to death in seconds."

"Figure she was awake?"

"Hard to say. Have to wait for the M.E.'s report."

"Christ, Joe, who could--"

"Detectives?" A patrolman whose name neither men remembered entered the room.

"Yeah?" both answered.

"We have somethin' here. This isn't her kid."

"She's way too old to be the mother, we know that," Stiletti said.

"Well, detective, it doesn't look like she's even a relation. We've canvassed the entire floor. Mrs. Burtonsmith lives alone according to all accounts. She baby-sits for a little extra cash for a few couples in the building. She," he pointed to the girl, "is the only girl the vic sits for. She's also the only girl on the floor."

"So who's the mother?" Stiletti asked.

"A Jennifer Leery, single mother, thirty years old. The girl's name is Tracy Leery."

"The Leery's names are on a phone number list on the refrigerator," Bennett said.

"So where's the mother?" Stiletti asked.

"Hold on," Bennett said and raced out of the room.

Stiletti and the uniformed officer followed. Bennett came from the kitchen with a small notepad in his hand. He held it up for his partner to read.

"Any doubt we're on the right trail?" Bennett asked.

Stiletti read the top page of the notepad. There were three phone numbers scribbled on it. The first was Leery's cell phone number. The second followed the words Coal Train. A restaurant? A club? The third was written under a name that stopped Stiletti's breathing.

"*Brock Edwards?* This is a joke."

"We have got to find this guy. I'll run the number. Maybe we'll get lucky with an address for Mr. Edwards. Worst case, we find the mother before she comes home to this slice of hell."

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There was a sensation of a warm hand running its fingers up Brock's neck. The hand didn't stop at the folds of flesh beneath the skull or running fingers through his hair. The hand eased inside his head, under skin, around bone, as easily as greased meat sliding into meat. The fingers felt like they were rubbing Brock's brain. It was a violation but not a terrible one. Brock had known it for years. He knew that the alien symbiote hadn't actually penetrated his skin. This was far too intimate a feeling for that. The alien was home. Brock could almost hear it purring.

The alien thrummed his adrenal glands making Brock shiver. What the hell had been going on with him these past weeks? Walking around whining and settling for scraps, playing the role of Nice-Guy-Eddie for these ass-bag editors. Bending over for the government agents. No drive. No stones! Brock had allowed everyone around him to treat him like a chump.

"We don't take handouts. We don't bow to anyone. We do as we like, when we like," Venom said.

Venom cracked his neck. Brock and the alien had achieved a state of ectosymbiosis. If humans were the top of the food chain, Venom now stood looking down on the chain. They were supreme, they were back in power and nothing---

Venom looked at the bed. It was Brock's bed. The woman on it, he called her Jen. They had engaged in an act of intercourse. What was Brock trying to achieve by this, Venom wondered. There had been so much trauma in the life of Brock recently, entire swatches of memory had been obliterated during the merging.

Jen writhed on the bed and moaned. Something scratched from deep within the shared mind of Venom. An emotion? A longing? Something about this female. Brock had cared for her. Her injury had been accidental. Maybe even forced, Venom thought. The entire merging was forced on Brock though he accepted it now. The initial combining was of his choice years ago. This time, another was to blame.

Venom watched the woman lying, naked, broken and weeping on the bed. Had there been a future for them? The Brock in Venom whispered that there might have been. Had Carnage not introduced the alien...

*Carnage.*

Their offspring that was poisoned by the serial killer Kasady. He sought to control and manipulate Brock through this woman. She was an innocent. Carnage needed to see the error of his ways. Brock screamed for vengeance over the loss of his happiness. Venom agreed. The spawn must not be allowed to act of his own accord any longer.

A pounding rattled the apartment door.

Jen moaned. Brock surfaced in Venom's mind and the tear ducts of their body activated.

Venom assumed control and shut them down.

*Carnage...*

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"Hell is full and the damned are walking the earth," Bennett said from behind the computer monitor at the precinct.

"Got somethin'?" Stiletti sat next to his partner with a fresh cup of black coffee.

"There are all kinds of web pages on Venom. He's part urban myth and part horror-hero. One site says he's going to be on tour with Marilyn Manson soon."

"Christ." Stiletti gulped his coffee.

"None of this is fact though. It's all rumors from supposed eye witnesses and people who claim to have had their brains eaten and survived to tell the tale. You get the clearance code for the unit?"

"Mm-hmm." Stiletti held the half empty cup of coffee in his teeth and fished in his suit coat's pockets. Finding the scrap of paper he handed it to Bennett.

Bennett typed the site's address on the keyboard using his index fingers. The inter-precinct website slowly appeared. Bennett scrolled down the list of metahuman criminals until he found Venom, clicked and waited for the screen to load.

"Brock, Edward. Photo journalist. Big into weights. Wife's a suicide?"

"That surprises you?"

"Brock ain't the real issue here. We need info on his *other*." Bennett hit the tab concerning information on the symbiote.

Both detectives scanned the information on the screen.

"Dr. Reed Richards wrote this?"

"Yeah, years ago. Apparently he's the only one to have done any serious research on the thing," Bennett said.

"It says the thing requires a living host to survive, the symbiote can and has fended for itself with its own set of unique powers. The symbiote's telepathic, doesn't need physical contact to influence the minds of others. What's a psychic scream?"

Stiletti shrugged.

"The symbiote can blend with any background, using an optic-camouflage effect. The symbiote requires certain chemicals found in living brain tissue in order to survive? It's a freakin' cannibal?"

"It says they have a commensalism type of symbiosis. One benefits, the other ain't hurt. When starved of these chemicals, the symbiote develops a mutable exoskeleton, allowing it to form its own solid body which it uses to hunt and kill prey without the assistance of a host.

"Holy crap. This is way out of our league. I'm betting that black crud we found at the scenes of the murders was part of that symbiote thing."

"Thing ain't invulnerable though. Says here fire and ultra-sonics do what bullets and batons can't."

Stiletti's cell phone rang.

"Yeah, Stiletti. What did you find?"

Bennett continued to read the files on the computer.

"No bad guy. That's good. What about the vic- yer kidding! She's alive?"

"The Leery woman was at Brock's apartment?" Bennett asked.

"Keep everyone but crime scene the hell out of that place. Where did they take her? Yeah, I know where it is. No one goes in, get me?" Stiletti slapped his cell phone shut and pocketed it.

"They found Leery. She's beat all to hell but she's alive. The uniform that was first on scene thought he heard something from the bedroom before he kicked the door in but no luck."

"Guy's lucky. So barring any contradiction from the C.S.I. guys this is the real deal. We got Venom and he's on the warpath." Bennett retrieved his coat from the back of the chair.

"Right. You want the Brock place or the Leery woman?"

"I'll take Brock's but I got a phone call to make first," Bennett said.

"I agree, call 'em in. We'll meet up at O'Malley's to compare notes." Stiletti charged out of the computer bay.

Bennett scanned the small laminated card of phone numbers he kept in his wallet. It wasn't the first time he had used the card for this specific number. Living in New York, Manhattan especially, you were a prepared cop or a dead one.

Bennett picked up the desk phone and dialed.

"Code Blue? This is Detective Dwayne Bennett, hope you're in the mood for some action."

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*Sounds like something you might find on a warlock's shelf.*

*Anyway, I am the new writer for Venom here at Marvel 2000. Where has Mr. Faynberg gone? Why isn't he writing this? These issues do not concern us. The title that was left dangling like a piece of flesh over the tiger pit has been snatched away into the darkness.*

*I'm C. William Russette and I'll be your writer for the duration of this run. My job, given by the trusting D. Golightly, is to tie off and cauterize this limb, left bleeding for so long. I'm wrapping it up, okay?*

*Do I like Venom? No, not really. Have I read the work that I'm taking over? Yes, I did. I've gone a bit deeper than that, too. Off the deep end? Perhaps. The reason I took this gig wasn't just to get a foot in the old M2K door. It was because of what Mr. Faynberg did with this tired, misused Spider-man villain. He is a villain. He is also insane. Anyone so filled with hate that he thinks wearing what is essentially an alien leech is off his rocker in the worst way. The very idea of wearing another life form all over my body creeps me out somethin' fierce. That's why I'm writing it.*

*Mr. Faynberg took a boring commodity and slung it in an entirely new direction. I am going to write this in what I feel is a logical conclusion. I gotta admit, I'm havin' fun doing it.*

*Did I meet the mission? You, reader, will have to decide that for yourself.*

*C. William Russette  
June '07*

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MARVEL 2000 PRESENTS

# VENOM

#8 - "SERIAL TENDENCIES"

Part V: Feint the Devil

Written by CW Russette

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"Man, we need to stop hitting O'Malley's til three in the morning, bro," Stiletti said, chasing three Tylenol with hot espresso.

"Yer problem is you don't know how to fight the effects of alcohol. I've told you a hundred time how to handle that crap," Bennett said, reading a file.

"Maybe if we quit talking about work there we wouldn't drink so much and as a result, I wouldn't need your damn advice for how to --"

"Detectives? The Code Blue personnel that you requested are here?"

"Oh yeah?" Stiletti secured his collar button and tightened his tie.

"Officer..." Bennett said.

"Kripke, sir."

"Right. Kripke, I haven't had a chance to tell Lieutenant Gainey that the Code Blue boys were called in. He's gonna want to know. If you wouldn't mind informing him, we'll handle Code Blue."

"Sure," Officer Kripke said, straightening and heading for the lieutenant's office.

Both detectives watched as the police officer entered the lieutenant's office. The shouting began immediately. Both could see the officer's face turn red under the onslaught of expletives. Bennett and Stilleti headed for the front desk for their meeting with Code Blue. Even out of sight they heard the LT bellowing.

"Report to evidence lock up now, Kripke, not later! Where the hell are Bennett and Stilleti?"

"Well, he's been informed anyway," Stilleti mumbled to his partner.

"Rough ride for the rookie though," Bennett said.

"Kid's gotta learn the ropes at some point in his career. Am I right?"

"Those our people up ahead?"

Three members of Code Blue waited for them. The most eye-catching was the largest woman either had ever seen in person. Two males stood next to her, one with hair right out of a heavy metal band. Special rules for a special team, Bennett thought. Both the giantess and metal-head carried large weapon cases. The third man wore a massive tank on his back that had hoses running from it that connected to a uniquely shaped discharging device that could only be some sort next generation flame thrower.

"You Bennett and Stilleti?" long-hair said.

"That's us. You're obviously Code Blue," Bennett said.

"I'm Mad Dog Rassitano, this dainty princess is Rigger Ruiz and the pyro here is Fireworks Feilstein."

"Cute nick names," Stilleti said.

"Gimmie a sec and I'll have one for you, tiny," Ruiz said and winked.

"Meet an' greet is over. Let's get to business. Follow me," Bennett said and headed to an empty conference room.

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Brock's apartment was certainly crawling with CSU by now. Conceivably, Jen's was too. Hiding in either place was out. The hospital was a waste of time. Brock was certain that there was one place for his spawn to make his next move. The only other people that Brock Edwards was remotely involved with were working at the City Crier.

Venom hung upside down a block away from the Crier. He had planned on trying to go to work for a few minutes to try and find out what happened to Jen. He wasn't prepared for the police showing up last night. Certainly not as fast as they had. He wanted to check on Jen's life signs. Maybe take her to the hospital. The cops had taken care of that chore. Venom followed the ambulance on web-line to Belleview but entry to the medical center was impossible. The cops had invaded Brock Edward's apartment. If they found trace from either symbiote, in addition to that of Eddie Brock, then any fool could conclude who really lived there.

There would be an APB put out for Brock. No clothes that the symbiote could form would be enough to fool the throngs of New York's finest that circulated the hospital entrances and exits. The idea of appearing as a severely bandaged patient wandering the halls wasn't going to work either. How could he covertly find out what room Jen was in looking like that? Some doctor might try to treat him or a cop could question him and then more people would be hurt.

No. There's been enough of that.

Brock had the symbiote now. *He* was in control of the alien again. *He* would choose who got hurt from now on. There were three squad cars parked in front of the Crier. No chance of getting information there either. They were there for Jen or to find out where Brock Edwards



was. What a fool name, Brock thought. I should have fought that moron agent Bradley when he forced it on me. Regardless, once I'm through here I'll have to get another identity.

The symbiote rippled across Brock's body in disapproval. It was too early for the creature of shadows to be running around. It didn't get tired but it did feel discomfort. The temperature was going to hit a hundred degrees today. No clouds dotted the sky and there were precious few shadows for Venom to hide in. Brock was concerned about concealment but the alien wanted to insure its survival. While they were in the open, it was thirty stories up and under a roof ledge in deep shadow. Brock wasn't worried.

Discomfort or not, Venom was going to web himself in place right where he was, in perfect view of the bait in the City Crier.

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"Is all that gear really necessary?" Stilleti asked motioning to Fielstein's flame thrower.

"Did you call in saying that Venom was on the rampage?" Rassitano said.

"Yeah."

"Did you bother to read the file *at all*?" Ruiz said.

"This thing can't be stopped by bullets, it pours through nets and can separate from its host to escape. It grows tentacles that can rip a grown man apart into little bits of confetti before you can draw your gun. With its host it can throw your squad car right down your throat, detective.

"So, yes, in your precinct of stone and glass I want this gear with my team. The flame thrower stays and so does the sonic emitter." Rassitano motioned with his chin at Ruiz who was pulling a rifle out of its foam padded case that looked like it was right out of a Star Wars movie.

"Fire and sonics," Bennett said.

"You can read, outstanding. Can we get started now?" Fielstein said wiping the sweat off his moustache covered upper lip. "This heat is killing me."

"We just got the report from CSU that confirms the unsub\* is in fact the Venom symbiote. The particulate was found in Brock's apartment so it's a safe guess that he's in the driver's seat. Paperwork and fingerprints found at Brock's place tells us that he went back to playing reporter at some rag called the City Crier. We've got units stationed outside the Crier now.

\* (unknown subject)

"A neighbor called in complaining of noise from one Brock Edwards' apartment last night. When the officer showed up he found Ms. Jennifer Leery's in critical condition, naked, in Brock's bed. No other occupants."

"No one was there? Venom didn't attack the officer on the scene?" Rassitano asked.

"No Venom but there was trace. We're going to send a sample to Dr. Richards for answers. The symbiote is shedding or molting or some such thing," Bennett said.

"Is this connected to the other attacks?"

"We believe so but not like you're thinking. We didn't find any Particulate from the Venom symbiote in Brock's apartment. Nothing bigger than microscopic anyway."

"Explain," Rassitano said.

"We found a crimson substance that at first we took for blood. It wasn't. There was a lot of the cast off, red this time, near the window and at the secondary crime scene."

"Secondary crime scene?"

"Jen Leery wasn't the only one attacked last night. Her daughter and babysitter were slaughtered while Leery was with Brock. Crimson particulate, and only that, was found all over the crime scene."

"That can't be Carnage," Ruiz said.

"CSU confirms it is symbiote residue. The other crime scenes have it as well. Nothing from the Venom symbiote until last night though."

"What he did to that little girl, it's unspeakable. The act of a genuine psychopath," Stilleti said to the floor.

"Kasady isn't in control of the Carnage symbiote. He's locked up tight," Ruiz said.

"Either the Carnage symbiote has gone rogue or it's found a new host. From our understanding they don't do too well on their own, not for long periods of time anyway," Rassitano said.

"So either Carnage has found another nut to ride around on or he's corrupted some poor sap."

"Sounds right."

*What's worse is that we're not dealing with just Venom anymore. We have two symbiotes running wild in the city,* Bennett thought.

"Somebody call Spider-Man," Stilleti said grinning.

"What I'm wondering is how involved Venom is in all this if you've only found residue at one site."

"Doesn't matter. He gets brought in for questioning. We can hold him for 48 hours. We'll get our answers," Bennett said.

Bennett noted a subtle glance of acknowledgment float between the three Code Blue members. *What the hell was that about,* he wondered.

After two brief poundings on the conference room door Police Officer O'Grady, a tall, thick-built, tense looking man opened the door.

"Sirs, better come out here. There's a report that Venom and Carnage are tearing up our officers down at the Crier.

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Venom caught the police officer inches from crashing through the engraved front window of the City Crier. He had multiple stab wounds but bled minimally. Venom lowered him to the ground and leapt at Carnage. The red hued mass murderer was in the act of constricting another officer in its spiked tendrils.

"What're you doing here, Dad? I figured you'd have offed yourself by now from grief over the death of your little bitch," Carnage said decapitating the police officer.

Venom extended tentacles of himself around Carnage's throat and pulled tight. The remaining four officers were herding the employees of the Crier out of the building. *Good,* Venom thought. *I was worried that they might try and fight off both of us.*

The symbiote had been doing it's best to ventilate its host in the blistering summer heat when their son arrived. The shadow they were waiting in didn't provide any difference from standing in the direct sunlight. Brock had dozed off and the symbiote poked gently at his mind until he returned to consciousness. Carnage was moving at a high rate of speed to the street side of the building on the rooftop of the City Crier. Venom shot into action tearing through the thick, sticky air on a single web-line and hurled himself through the front door.

"We're here to give you a thorough spanking, spawn," Venom said extending his grin from ear to ear.

Venom's fist crashed against his son's face again and again. Pieces of the young symbiote splattered the desks like blood and dotted Venom's onyx fists. Both aliens noted the strange unraveling. Only Venom grinned.

"You're coming apart, boy."

Carnage steadied himself with hardened tendrils and caught the leaping Venom with more extensions, hurling him at one of the office windows. Venom rotated his body, fired webbing at the ceiling and the floor and sling-shot himself back at his son. Carnage turned his tentacles into sword and spear blades. Utilizing a true melding of man and symbiote Venom drew on the aliens gift of agility and angled himself through the mass of blades with minimal injury and landed on the other side.

"Impossible!" Carnage bellowed.

"Been at this a hell of a lot longer than you have, boy! That and I'm better at it than you and your watered down version of the symbiote." Venom fired webbing into Carnage's eyes and leapt out the door.

*I sounded like Spider-man in there. It does feel pretty good to be on the other side of the insults.* Venom leapt and began firing web-line after web-line. He looked over his shoulder and Carnage wasted no time swinging after him.

“Coward!” Carnage roared extending tendril after tendril to swing after Venom.

Venom knew the hatred came more from the alien spawn of his own symbiote than the host. The identification of the man beneath the alien skin was a mystery. Even if the body had been the same as the previous host (which it did not), Cletus Kasady was still locked down in a padded room.

“You two deserve one another, father! Weak and fails at everything you attempt. You only have the courage to fight the one thing that you shouldn’t!”

Venom launched himself higher in the cityscape of downtown Manhattan and fired another web-line.

“What’s that, boy?”

“Your nature!” Carnage climbed higher to match his sire’s elevation.

*Will it always come down to this? When the alien symbiote first grafted itself to Parker, it began draining him of his very life. Parker woke up to it and ditched the alien. I hit it off with the thing because he and I both hated Parker. The thing started to feed off me too. It was no overnight success but I managed to dominate its will. I made it work with me instead of devouring me. After that it only took small, if regular, amounts of whatever it needed from my body. In return I got to do what ever the hell I wanted as Venom. Uninhibited and beyond the law. Took a while but trying to get revenge on Parker lost its charm. The folly of youth. Everything was golden until the damn symbiote reproduced.*

*Then there were two. Carnage had none of the sire’s restraint. It had no problem feeding and killing. It didn’t help that it bonded with a genuine psychopath. It took even less time to break Kasady. The thing hates me because I broke it’s sires will or it hates the symbiote for getting tamed, doesn’t matter which. Carnage needs--*

Venom screamed as Carnage’s barbed extension punctured his upper leg.

“Did I catch you dreaming? Thinkin’ `bout that poor Jen were ya?” Carnage swung a large crimson battle axe grown at the end of his arm. Venom let go of his line and fell free before the axe connected with him. He snapped off another line of webbing and swung to the side of the nearest skyscraper.

Carnage will need time to turn around before engaging us again, Venom thought. Thanks to the symbiote, the bleeding in his leg was already plugged. It was a temporary fix but it would hold. There was nothing to be done for the pain.

Venom scaled the wall diagonally, simultaneously tracking Carnage on his return arc. Venom turned, put his back to the wall and watched the hideous grin grow on his spawn’s face as he drew near. Red tentacles hardened and became sharp. Carnage’s hands disappeared beneath an axe and a sickle.

Waiting until the last possible moment Venom fired webbing at Carnage's face. The spawn had caught on to that trick and raised his arm for shielding. Venom launched himself from the brick wall webbing the arm to his spawn's face. Carnage scrambled frantically before impacting with the steel enforced brickwork, creating a spider-web of cracks. Venom shot a line after line to increase the distance.

---

Carnage knew he was falling and increasing in speed, worse still, he was totally blind and didn't know which way was up.

The current host, Ian Johnson, was stunned but only marginally injured. The human should last a little while longer anyway. Carnage extended tendrils in every direction at once, as far as he could reach. To his left, at the shoulder, the barbed extensions bounced off something. The alien aimed all his extensions, and drove hard.

The momentum tore one of the tentacles off and strained a dozen more. His velocity stopped, slowly, due to the elastic nature of the symbiote. He slapped into the side of the building, again. Carnage held fast and secured himself.

The alien rippled across Johnson's bruised and bloody body. *Close, father. Too close. You'll pay for that. Your destruction will be a painful and lengthy experience. I wish it were otherwise but this body is rotten. The host has poisoned himself.*

Carnage was puzzled for a long time as to why he was molting so rapidly, so early. The alien was shedding bio-matter faster than it could generate it. Carnage had probed deep and hard into Johnson's brain for answers.

The human was an athlete which was the main reason why the symbiote had chosen him. Johnson was strong and aggressive, a fighter. It was all artificial. Carnage should have examined the human before bonding. The human was in a declining state of fitness and had been supplementing his power loss with something called steroids. Johnson had been using chemical enhancements for years and was suffering for it. Bad as the drugs were for the human they were lethal for symbiotes.

Venom hadn't suffered for his choice in Brock. Why had Carnage had to? Venom didn't deserve the host he had. Brock should have been left a husk years ago.

*No, this will not continue, Carnage thought. Father has forgotten himself and our people. I need a strong host if I'm to fight this infection before it becomes fatal. I will kill father and steel Brock. Once I have him I bleed him dry and move on to the next mortal morsel.*

---

"What's up, Bennett. How many this time?" Rassitano asked unloading his gear from the Code Blue van.

Bennett, Stilleti and Code Blue made record time charging through Manhattan. It was a miracle that they caused no accidents. By the time they were on scene three patrol units had already cordoned off the street in front of the City Crier.

Ruiz and Fielstein were armed with weapons at the ready when Bennett and Stilleti returned from getting an update from inside the scene.

"It true we got Venom *and* Carnage in there?" Ruiz stretched her heavily muscled shoulders.

"There are injuries. Nothing too severe. One casualty, a cop. Both perps left the scene minutes before we got here," Bennet said.

No one spoke for a beat.

"One casualty?" Rassitano asked.

"Two of our guys almost bought it but word is Venom showed up and stopped Carnage," Stilleti said.

"Venom stopped Carnage," Fielstein said.

"You heard right," Stilleti said.

"Carnage blew into the Crier like a tornado but before he could really dig in Venom was throwin' down with him. When Venom bolted, Carnage followed," Bennett said.

"That's nothing new though. They've been at odds before. Tried to kill one another even," Rassitano said.

"When was the last time Venom saved someone from harm though? Especially cops?" Ruiz said.

Silence.

"Anyone else think Venom was here waiting for Carnage? Then lured him away so no one else got hurt?" Stilleti said.

"Would explain how Venom got here so fast. People inside said Carnage seemed surprised he was there at all." Bennett flipped through his note pad. "He said, 'I figured you'd have offed yourself by now from grief over the death of your little bitch.'"

"We clearly don't have all the pieces to this puzzle yet," Rassitano said.

"Venom crippled that woman. We just take 'em both down," Ruiz said.

"Stand down, Rigger. Venom will answer for whatever crimes he has committed. We gotta find 'em both first," Rassitano said.

"I'll check on air support. Hopefully they're out swinging around the city somewhere we can spot them." Bennett strolled to his duty vehicle, a brown Honda Civic. His cell phone rang before he could open the door.

"Detective Bennett?" the dispatcher said.

"Yeah?"

"I've got a caller insisting he speak with you. He's called three times now."

"Who is it?"

"He won't say. He just says he can help you close the Leery case and the other recent murders in one shot."

"Put him through."

---

Emeshed in the crimson strands formed from the Carnage symbiote Venom was helplessly smashed through a rooftop chimney. Venom drove his claws into the tar covered roof but Carnage ripped him free and slammed him down, again.

"You're so quiet, father. Where's your sense of humor n--"

Twin web-lines shot out attaching themselves to Carnage's shins. Venom pulled hard, slapping Carnage's head off the tarmac. The tendrils binding him relaxed enough for Venom to jump free. He landed on his son's chest. Enjoying the muffled crunching sound he leapt up into the blazing New York sky. Red tentacles lashed for the escaped prey but caught only air.

*That was close,* Venom thought. Something was seriously wrong with Brock's back judging by how rapidly it was tightening. The symbiote took the worst of the assault but it wasn't invulnerable. Brock knew he sure as hell wasn't. Carnage had the advantage here.

Unlike the Venom symbiote, Carnage had no empathy for it's host. The Carnage alien could and would just move on to the next host once the current one had expired to continue the chase. Brock had a monogamous relationship with his second skin. No one else could control his alien anyway so there really was no choice.

*Who is the real target here, Brock wondered. Me or the alien? Carnage has stated his hatred for his "father" more than once. Even cursed it for not devouring me like all the other symbiotes do their hosts. Does that mean the Venom alien is the real target here? Carnage wants me for a host? Is that even possible?*

The idea sent chills down his stiffening back. This would be the last fight between the two, one way or the other, Venom decided. He looked over his shoulder and fired another weblines.

*Come on, stupid. I'm not going to be able to take much more of--*

Blazing pain slashed across his back. Venom froze in mid air, paralyzed. His entire back locked into place as he suffered an intolerable muscle spasm. Venom felt like he had been branded.

Venom fell.

Before Venom could muster the willpower to raise a limb and discharge a life saving web, what felt like a freight train slammed into his back triggered a howl of agony.

"Hi, Dad," Carnage growled into his ear.

Venom extended claws, reached for his foe and latched onto Carnage. A red pick axe stabbed into Venom's pelvis. Both combatant's agonized screams were cut short when they impacted on the roof.

Venom managed to get to his feet willing, his symbiote acting as a bandage and support for the latest injury. Carnage was already up, firing barbed tentacles. Venom side-stepped, grabbed the extension and yanked. Carnage was off his feet and flew directly into Venom's onyx fist.

*More adrenaline!*

The symbiote obeyed. In under a second the release of oxygen increased to Brock's brain and muscle tissue. His reaction time was increased as was his aggression. How much of a difference it would make against Carnage he didn't know but this was the final hour. Brock had to pull out all the stops.

Carnage lay at his feet. Venom turned and leapt from the building to its neighbor, the destination he had almost succeeded in making it to before Carnage and his failing back took him down. He flipped forward in mid flight, fearing a second strike from behind, just in time to react to Carnage descending upon him.

"You won't be escaping, father. Never again."

Carnage lashed out with twin tentacles and pulled Venom into close-quarters range. Venom began landing blow after blow to the head of his patricidal son as they crashed through the tenement building's roof.

The duo refused to disengage after impacting on the top floor. Carnage manifested claws and cut into his bound sire. Venom returned strike for strike noting the sound of breaking bones and the discharge of red coming from his spawned symbiote. Some cuts were deeper and more severe than others but Venom felt none of them. His mind was focused on one thing: reducing Carnage to a red smear. He struck for all of Carnage's victims in the recent weeks. He struck for the families that would mourn the loss of loved ones who died at the hands of this pure predator. Mostly he struck for what Brock had been forced to do to Jen and for the loss of her innocent daughter.

Carnage formed a war hammer on the end of his arm and slammed it down. He missed Venom's head and struck the combat-weakened floor instead. Again both alien-enhanced humans fell together in a gory embrace.

Venom was on the bottom and suffered the worst of the fall. Carnage formed another hammer with his second hand and reared back. Brock was stunned. The symbiote was not. It launched tentacles that enwrapped Carnage's limbs and held them shakily at bay.

"Come on, old man. Hasn't this gone on long--"



Venom reached up with both hands and throttled Carnage. The choking sound pleased Brock. Crimson tendrils lashed out at Venom and met onyx strands at each turn. Carnage continued to choke as Venom rose to his feet.

"It HAS gone on long enough, Carnage. So today we end it." Venom dashed forward, tripping Carnage and slamming him to the floor.

"Today--"

SLAM

"--it--"

SLAM

"--ENDS!"

The long rotten, wooden floor surrendered to the might of the battle and dropped the duo to the main floor. Humans and aliens alike were exhausted. Tentacles were retracted but Brock kept his hands locked on Carnage's throat. So transfixed was he on the murder of his enemy, neither Brock nor his symbiote noticed the three pronged fork slowly manifest from Carnage's chest. It exited Brock's back unhindered.

Venom rolled onto his back spitting blood. He retracted the mask so he could attempt to draw a stronger breathe. It made no difference. Brock could faintly hear the sucking sound coming from his chest.

Carnage stumbled to his feet drawing deep choking breaths. He forced his throat to open again.

"You lose, father. Today you die and I will take Brock for myself. You have grown too weak to continue on this plane of existence. I find you unworthy and sentence you to death--"

"All this... all the killing... the re-bonding of us... this was just so you could kill us and take Brock as your host?" Venom tried to get up on all fours but the energy required was more than he could manage.

"I had to test you to make sure that you were still fit, Brock. I didn't want you turning out to be weak and unworthy of me."

"It doesn't matter that children were hurt in this stupid game of yours?"

Carnage laughed harder than he had in a very long time. He formed a double-bladed war axe and raised it over his head.

Venom rolled over on his side exposing his back to Carnage. The symbiote began retreating from Brock's body.

"I am embarrassed to be your spawn--"

The focus of the sonic emitter struck Carnage in the ribs sending pain searing throughout his form. The alien screamed in absolute agony. Large globules began dripping off the alien's human host as it began backing away. From behind, a second bolt of sonics crashed into Carnage doubling the assault and threatening to steal consciousness from it.

"Keep it up, Rigger!" Fielstein ordered, keeping his beam focused on the back of Carnage's writhing and lashing form.

The crimson symbiote slid off of the near dead body of 'The Idol' Ian Johnson. His face was swollen like someone had taken a sledge hammer to it on one side. Dozens of lacerations and deep bruises marked his almost naked body. The last of the red alien slid off of its spent host and slid across the concrete floor.

"Watch it, Fireworks! It's looking for a crack to slide through!" Rigger Ruiz yelled.

"Ain't gonna happen, darlin'," Fireworks Fielstein fired a burst of sonics that sent the alien sliding in the opposite direction.

Ruiz and Fielstein maneuvered the alien symbiote away from Brock and Johnson where it stopped trying to escape and took a more upright form. The alien looked more hideous without the host form to take shape from. Not quite humanoid or even three dimensional, the alien was something akin to an evil, walking, meth-inspired painting.

"Fine, humans. You have me. Capture me and take me for --"

"We're not here to capture you, alien," Mad Dog Rassitano stepped from the shadows. He opened the ignition valve.

"What are you taking about?" the symbiote said.

"We're done talking." Rassitano bathed the alien in flames.

Carnage screamed even louder. Ruiz and Fielstein unleashed their twin blasts of sonic energy, forming a triangle of damage around the alien. It wasn't long before the only sounds in the first floor of the abandoned tenement building was that of burning wood and charred flesh.

"Let it cool some then bag it. We'll drop it off at Four Freedoms Plaza, let the good Dr. Richards decide what to do with it," Rassitano said.

"Where the hell is Brock?" Ruiz yelled.

---

"Where do you think yer going, Eddie?" Bennett looked down at the almost naked, severely injured form of Eddie Brock. He had definitely seen better days, Bennett thought.

"You got what you want, cop. The killer is down. I'm done."

"We got hours of fun questions for you to answer, Brock. You are going no where." Stilleti drew his sidearm and held it at his side. Bennett kept his piece holstered. Brock looked like seven miles of rough road but he was still built like a tank. Neither policeman had thought to bring a taser or pepper spray. Brock was supposed to go down inside. It looked like only the symbiote was a casualty.

"Rassitano, everything secure in there?" Bennett said into his radio.

"Carnage is down, the host probably won't make it. No sign of Brock or the Venom alien. Over."

"We've got Brock out here but no sign of the symbiote. That thing get away from you in there?"

"Could've crawled into a crack or something. We're scanning now. Over."

"Put your hands on your head and drop to your knees, Brock. Let's be cool about this," Stilleti said.

Brock frowned and shook his head.

"I gave you Carnage. I've committed no crime. I am *not* going to jail and I *sure as hell* ain't going back to the loony bin. Walk away like you ain't seen me an' no one has to visit the hospital."

"I've been to the hospital, Brock. We saw what you did to Jen Leery. They don't know if she'll ever walk again," Stilette said.

"She's alive?"

Brock lowered his eyes, his brow furrowed. Bennett couldn't hear what he mumbled.

"Why'd you try to kill her, Brock? What did she do you?"

"Shut up, Stilleti." Bennett drew his gun. "Hands on your head, Brock!"

Shadows began intensifying around Brock. *Is that him or the clouds*, Bennett wondered and raised his pistol.

"She try to run away when you told you what you really were? Or did she laugh at you when--"

Tendrils of pure onyx shot out from Brock's mouth and wrenched both men's firearms from their hands before either could squeeze the triggers. Thicker strands of animate ink took the police men by the hands, gagged them and slammed them into the nearest wall.

The black crawled out across Brock's body stemming from his mouth. His red-rimmed eyes never leaving Stilleti's face.

Venom belched as though he had just finished a keg of beer.

"You need to watch yer mouth, cop. If we were the monster you thought we were you'd be dead now. We're going to let you both live. That's two favors you owe. Are we clear?"

Venom slammed both men into the brick wall.

Stilleti hung limp. Bennett squinted his eyes at Venom.

"I am leaving and the symbiote is going with me. We won't be this gentle next time, cop." Venom dropped the policemen and swung off.

Bennett checked his partner's pulse. The idiot was alive, just out. Bennett rubbed his wrists and retrieved his radio.

"Rassitano, Brock still has the symbiote. The perp has rabbited." *Can't wait to hear how the L.T. feels about this.*

---

Venom swung as fast and as far as he could before surrendering control to the alien. He was too hurt. His back was on fire with pain and he knew he had a punctured lung. The symbiote was plugging holes and keeping everything together but it wouldn't be too long before he had to get medical attention. Brock knew a few places. Not all doctors worked in hospitals and fancy offices.

That wasn't the real issue. Carnage *was* finally destroyed but Brock was also Venom again. *It would always be this way*, he thought. On its own the alien would likely revert to Carnage-like behavior and people would get hurt. Brock didn't want any more Jen Leerys or their kids on his conscious. They were enough.

He wouldn't visit her. Not one more time. She was safer away from him and his burden; his curse. It was because of him and his spawn that she lost her child. Even if she took him back and they cobbled some kind of life together there would always be the death of her child between them. *Better she get to healing herself now*, Brock thought.

There were too many bad memories here in New York. All his faces were too well known. He'd already tried California so that was out too. All he needed was a team of Avengers hunting him down. Plenty of states he could get lost in. Plenty of countries he could slip into.

That was the one good thing about the alien. He never had to rely on anyone, ever.

Brock knew he would never be alone.

**END OF VOLUME ONE**

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*There you have it. The end of both my run and the first volume of VENOM.*

*My health has kept me from writing regularly which is why its taken me over two months to wrap this up.*

*I didn't think that I would have as much fun playing with Venom and all his selves as I did. He and his second skin are really quite complex. Much like Brock and his outlook on life. He's not really a hero nor does he have any desire to be one. He's not a villain either, not any more than the Punisher is. With Parker out of his system and Carnage out of this world Brock and his alien really have a wide open future before them. There's nothing to slow them down and few to stop them from what ever it is that they choose to pursue.*

*Where will that road take them?*

*That's for the next writer to decide.*

*Hope it was as fun reading as it was writing.*

*-C. William Russette 9.12.2007*