

near death

issue #1
20-page script
by Jay Faerber

PAGE 1

PAGE 1, Panel One

We open on a shot of Markham's car, driving through the nearly empty Seattle streets in the middle of the night.

CAPTION: Alec Markham's been in worse situations.

PAGE 1, Panel Two

Inside the car, Markham is at the wheel. He's leaning forward, gripping the wheel tightly. His eyes are only half-open. Simone, on these first three pages, Markham's hair is totally black. No white at all.

CAPTION: At least, that's what he keeps telling himself as he tries not to black out.

CAPTION: Luckily for him, the streets are almost deserted this time of night.

PAGE 1, Panel Three

Back outside the car again. Markham has drifted into the other lane, and nearly hits an oncoming car. The other car has to swerve to avoid Markham.

CAPTION: Almost.

PAGE 1, Panel Four

Markham's car is parked awkwardly in a small parking lot beside a small, one-story building just outside the city. Markham is limping away from the car.

CAPTION: As he hobbles towards the front door, he hopes Sutton isn't out on a date or something.

CAPTION: But she's never out on a date. She's never out anywhere.

PAGE 1, Panel Five

Markham approaches the front door of the building. We can see a lit sign out front.

CAPTION: It occurs to him that he should take her out more often. Buy her dinner.

Take her to a movie. He decides that if he makes it through this, he will.

TEXT ON SIGN: North Seattle Animal Hospital

PAGE 1, Panel Six

Close on Markham's bloody hand as it pushes the doorbell. Next to the bell is a sign.

TEXT ON SIGN: Hours: M-F 9:00am - 7:00pm
Sat 9:00am - 8:00pm
Sun 12:00pm - 5:00pm

After Hours Emergency: Ring Bell

PAGE 2

PAGE 2, Panel One

Cut to the bedroom of Dr. Sutton Faulkner. She's in her 30s, blond, and could be attractive if she put some effort into it. She's sitting on her bed wearing a long t-shirt, and pulling on a thick robe. Her hair's a mess.

CAPTION: Dr. Sutton Faulkner stopped being a heavy sleeper shortly after she added 24-hour emergency service to her small veterinary hospital.

CAPTION: She lives alone and doesn't have much of a social life, so she figured she may as well benefit from the premium people are willing to pay for late-night visits to the vet.

PAGE 2, Panel Two

Sutton, now clothed in a robe and wearing glasses, moves through the back of her office with the use of a cane. This part of the office is where the injured animals are kept in cages.

CAPTION: But as she makes her way from her apartment to her office, she swears that if the person ringing the bell turns out to be Mrs. Pretzman complaining that her cat threw up again, Sutton's finally going to tell the old bitch off.

PAGE 2, Panel Three

We're in the front reception area of Sutton's small animal hospital now. She's opening the front door and sees Markham standing there, shoulders hunched. The door is not all the way open in this shot. She's in the process of opening it.

MARKHAM / weak: Sorry about this, Doc.

SUTTON: Alec, what's --

PAGE 2, Panel Four

Markham collapses, falling forward into her office. Sutton is moving quickly out of his way.

SUTTON: Jesus!

PAGE 2, Panel Five

Markham lies there on the floor, motionless, as Sutton stands over him, a surprised look on her face.

CAPTION: This isn't the first time Sutton has tended to Alec Markham's wounds, but it *is* the first time he's collapsed before even reaching her operating room.

CAPTION: She's good in a crisis, and is confident she'll be able to save him once he's on the table.

PAGE 2, Panel Six

Sutton is bent over, her hands under Markham's armpits, as she awkwardly drags him across the floor.

CAPTION: It's *getting* him on the table that's going to be a challenge.

PAGE 3

PAGE 3, Panel One

BIG panel, almost a splash -- of Markham lying on Sutton's operating table. He's shirtless, and his chest is all bloody from a bullet wound near his heart. Sutton is standing over him, trying to dig the bullet out. I think this would look cool as a downshot, but it's up to you.

CAPTION: It's three hours before Sutton has the bullet removed from Markham's chest. She thinks the worst is over.

CAPTION: She's wrong.

PAGE 3, Panel Two

This is a long, thin panel across the bottom of the page. It's black, save for a EKG rhythm readout. Only Markham has "flatlined," so the line is straight, with no peaks or valleys.

NO COPY

PAGE 4

PAGE 4, Panel One

Cut to Markham, with his hair still black (no white at all), dressed in the same clothes he was in in the last scene, wandering through a bleak, barren landscape. His clothes are fine -- no blood on them or anything, and he's not injured. I'm picturing the landscape being all rocky and hard and empty. This should be the biggest panel of the page.

Color note: This scene (pages 4-7) should be colored in stark contrast to the rest of the book. Not b&w, but muted or different in some other way.

NO COPY

PAGE 4, Panel Two

Markham sees a man in the distance. This can be an over-the-shoulder shot.

MARKHAM: Hey!

PAGE 4, Panel Three

Markham approaches the man, and is shocked by what he sees. Frame this shot so we can't see the man's face. It's off-panel. Maybe all we can see is his shoulder or something.

MARKHAM: Do you know --
MAKRHAM: Oh.

PAGE 4, Panel Four

Reveal the man, as we get our first good look at him. He's a normal-looking man, except for the huge bullet hole in his head. The bullet hole on his forehead is small (an entry wound) but the back of his head is blown out (the exit wound).

DEAD MAN: Hi, Markham.
DEAD MAN: Long time.

PAGE 5

There's a lot of panels on this page, and it might work best as a nine-panel grid, but I'll leave it up to you to decide the best layout.

PAGE 5, Panel One

Markham is shocked.

MARKHAM: You ... how ...

PAGE 5, Panel Two

Back on the dead man.

DEAD MAN: How? You killed me, that's how.
DEAD MAN: I was your first, right? Guess that makes me special.

PAGE 5, Panel Three

On both of them.

MARKHAM: Where am I? I don't understand.

DEAD MAN: What did you think was gonna happen after you died? Heaven?

MARKHAM: I ... I never believed in that stuff.

DEAD MAN: That doesn't appear to be relevant, now does it?

PAGE 5, Panel Four

Markham is shocked and horrified.

MARKHAM: My God ... if I had known ...

PAGE 5, Panel Five

Back on the dead man. Markham's dialogue can come from off-panel.

DEAD MAN: Yeah? If you had known...?

MARKHAM / from off: Well I ... I'd have behaved differently.

DEAD MAN: You mean that?

PAGE 5, Panel Six

Back on Markham.

MARKHAM: Sure. Yes.

MARKHAM: Why?

PAGE 5, Panel Seven

Back on the dead man.

DEAD MAN: Because maybe there's still time.

DEAD MAN: Maybe you can undo what you did.

PAGE 5, Panel Eight

On Markham.

MARKHAM: Like, balance the scales?

PAGE 5, Panel Nine

On the dead man.

DEAD MAN: If that's now you want to think of it, yeah.
DEAD MAN: But just remember ...

PAGES 6-7

PAGES 6-7, Spread

This is a spread of ALL the people Markham's killed, suddenly standing behind the first dead man. This is asking a lot, but draw as many people as you can -- close to a hundred, if not more. They've all got various wounds: mostly gunshot wounds, but some have been burned, some have broken necks, slit throats, etc. We don't need to see them all very clearly -- you can use cheats and shortcuts to put a lot of them in the background. But the important thing is that we hit the reader with just how many people Markham's killed.

DEAD MAN: ... you've got a LOT to make up for.

PAGE 8

PAGE 8, Panel One

Cut back to Sutton's operating table, moments after we left. She's just used the defibrillator paddles to re-start Markham's heart. So the paddles are no longer touching his chest, but she's standing next to his bed, the paddles in her hands, having just used them. Markham's sitting bolt upright, eyes open, surprising Sutton. His hair has the white patch in it now.

MARKHAM: Aah!

SUTTON: Oh!

PAGE 8, Panel Two

Markham tries to get off the table, but Sutton stops him.

MARKHAM: I need to --

SUTTON: Wait, you can't --

MARKHAM: But I --

PAGE 8, Panel Three

Markham slumps back down on the operating table.

MARKHAM: Ow ...

PAGE 8, Panel Four

Sutton stands next to the table.

SUTTON: "Ow" indeed. You've been shot.

SUTTON: Just stay still. You shouldn't even be conscious, much less trying to get up.

PAGE 8, Panel Five

Sutton runs her fingers through Markham's hair, noticing the new white area.

SUTTON: Hmm.

PAGE 9

PAGE 9, Panel One

Cut to a shot of the sun rising over the Seattle skyline.

NO COPY

PAGE 9, Panel Two

Cut Markham lying in the bed in Sutton's extra bedroom. This isn't a hospital room -- just a normal bedroom. He's shirtless, and his chest is bandaged. Sun is streaming into the room through the window. Sutton is entering the room carrying a glass of juice.

SUTTON: You're awake.

PAGE 9, Panel Three

Sutton sets the juice on a small bedside table. Markham's looking up at her.

SUTTON: You've been out for a day and a half. I already know what you're going to say, but I have to say this anyway. You should go see a real doctor.

MARKHAM: Do you believe in God?

PAGE 9, Panel Four

Sutton looks surprised. She wasn't expecting that question.

SUTTON: Um...

SUTTON: Well, no. I don't think I do.

PAGE 9, Panel Five

On just Markham.

MARKHAM: I never did either. But when my heart stopped, I ... I think I died. That's how it works, right?

SUTTON / from off: Yes, but your heart was stopped for less than a minute.

MARKHAM: Well, it was long enough. I saw something, Sutton.

PAGE 9, Panel Six

Closer in on Markham. Maybe just his eyes, for dramatic effect.

MARKHAM: Something I don't ever want to see again.

PAGE 10

PAGE 10, Panel One

Cut to a shot of Markham working out on universal gym-style equipment in Sutton's apartment. Sutton is standing by, watching him. He's really pushing himself and is soaked in sweat.

CAPTION: They didn't talk any more about what Markham saw when his heart stopped. But whatever Markham saw changed him. He'd been a driven man for as long as Sutton had known him, but this was something else.

CAPTION: For the next week and a half, Markham pushed himself every day. He exercised harder. Longer. Almost like he was in training for something.

PAGE 10, Panel Two

Sutton hands Markham a towel as he sits up, finished with his workout.

MARKHAM: Thanks.

SUTTON: Sure.

MARKHAM: No, I mean ...

PAGE 10, Panel Three

In very close on just Markham, a serious, earnest expression on his face.

MARKHAM: THANKS.

PAGE 10, Panel Four

Sutton stands there, and Markham sits there, an awkward silence between them.

NO COPY

PAGE 10, Panel Five

A new angle on the two of them.

SUTTON: So ... are you getting ready to go back to work?

MARKHAM: Sort of.

PAGE 11

PAGE 11, Panel One

Cut to a daytime shot of Pioneer Square, where Max and Markham stand under the pergola, an old, covered walkway. The crowd is a mix of homeless people and tourists. Max can look however you want him to look, but he should have some sort of defining characteristic. He's a quirky sidekick, not a big hero or big villain. So he should be short, or fat, or something like that. Just make him interesting.

MAX: You're looking good for a guy who almost died.

MARKHAM: Thanks, Max.

MARKHAM: I need to know about the contract I was on when I got shot.

PAGE 11, Panel Two

Another shot, closer in, of the two of them talking.

MAX: Mr. Novak already got someone else. You don't need to worry about it. As soon as you're feeling up to it, there'll be plenty of work for you.

MARKHAM: This "someone else." He done the job yet?

MAX: As a matter of fact, he hasn't. The mark went off the grid, and it's taken some time to find her.

MARKHAM: But he HAS found her?

PAGE 11, Panel Three

Max looks suspicious.

MAX: Got a lead on her yesterday, yeah. Why do you care? It's not your concern.

PAGE 11, Panel Four

On just Markham.

MARKHAM: It's the first job I didn't finish myself. I'm having a hard time letting it go.

MARKHAM: Who's my replacement?

PAGE 11, Panel Five

Back on just Max.

MAX: You know Brewster, right? Of course you do. Everyone knows Brewster. Well, he took the gig.

PAGE 11, Panel Six

Back on Markham.

MARKHAM: And he's moving now, I bet.

PAGE 11, Panel Seven

On both of them again.

MAX: Like I said, he got a lead on her yesterday.

MARKHAM: Good. I'm glad the job's in good hands. Brewster will come through, no doubt about it.

MAX: So what about you? You ready to take some new jobs?

PAGE 11, Panel Eight

On Markham.

MARKHAM: Not just yet. I'm still recuperating, you know? Doc says I shouldn't exert myself. But thanks for telling me about Brewster. I'll sleep easier knowing he's on the job.

PAGE 11, Panel Nine

And on Max, again looking very suspicious.

MAX: If you say so...

PAGE 12

PAGE 12, Panel One

Cut to a nighttime establishing shot of the Smith Tower, where Markham lives. I've already sent you reference for this Seattle landmark.

FROM INSIDE TOP OF SMITH TOWER: Hey, Brewster, it's Markham.

PAGE 12, Panel Two

Cut inside, where we get our first look of Markham's amazing penthouse, a 3-story loft inside the top pyramid of the tower. I sent you some reference for this as well, but very few interior

photos exist, so I'm fine if you want to just make it up. Markham is in the loft, talking on his cellphone. He can be very small in this shot, as the focus is on the architecture of his penthouse. This is the biggest shot of the page.

MARKHAM: Yeah, you heard about that, eh?

MARKHAM: Well, thanks. I'm doing much better. So listen, I heard you took over the contract and that you're in town.

MARKHAM: Oh, really? Guess I heard wrong. Cedar Run, huh? Not much of a nightlife there.

MARKHAM: You can say that again. I had a hell of a time tracking her. The Marshals service is pretty damned good at hiding these witnesses. How'd you manage to find her?

MARKHAM: Nice. Very smart. Well, listen, I won't keep you. I was just going to offer to buy you a drink if you were in town.

MARKHAM: Yeah, that's cool. Happy hunting.

PAGE 12, Panel Three

Markham switches off his phone, and we can see he's seriously considering something. Maybe scratching his chin while he thinks?

NO COPY

PAGE 13

PAGE 13, Panel One

Cut to a nighttime shot of Markham's car -- something expensive, a Lexus or something -- driving away from us, down the freeway past a freeway sign.

FREEWAY SIGN:	Olympia	24
	Cedar Run	87
	Portland	165

PAGE 13, Panel Two

Cut to inside Markham's car, as he drives.

CAPTION: People in Markham's profession have habits and routines and methods just like any other professionals. Different people have different ways of approaching their jobs, and they also have different quirks.

CAPTION: Everyone who knows Brewster knows about his particular quirk. Whenever he's in town for a job, he calls the local escort service with very specific request: he wants one white woman, and one black.

PAGE 13, Panel Three

Cut to Markham inside the office of an escort service. He's talking to a woman sitting in a small cubicle wearing a headset.

CAPTION: Cedar Run is too small of a town to have its own escort service, so Markham visited three escort services in the closest city until he found one that admitted to fulfilling Brewster's request.

PAGE 13, Panel Four

Markham backhands the woman across the face.

CAPTION: These places depend on discretion and don't give out client information.

CAPTION: Unless you know how to ask.

PAGE 14

Simone, I picture this page as being four "letterbox" panels of equal size, stacked one on top of the other. You can even use the same image of the motel if you want, and just change the elements that need to be changed in each panel. Whatever's easiest for you.

PAGE 14, Panel One

Cut to Markham sitting in his car, across the street from a small motel. It's nighttime and raining hard. He's slouched in his seat, barely awake.

NO COPY

PAGE 14, Panel Two

The two prostitutes -- one white, one black -- emerge from Brewster's room, their jackets pulled up over their heads to protect them from the rain.

NO COPY

PAGE 14, Panel Three

It's daytime now, and the rain is still coming down hard as Markham remains in his car, waiting and watching.

NO COPY

PAGE 14, Panel Four

Brewster emerges from his motel room, and we see him for the first time. He's a white man in his 30s. He's got a big, thick mustache and is wearing a cowboy hat. It's still raining.

NO COPY

PAGE 15

PAGE 15, Panel One

Cut to Markham's car following Brewster's rental car (a simple sedan) through the small town. It's still raining.

CAPTION: For a job like this, where there's a single target, the preferred method of most professionals would be to sit a safe distance away and use a high-powered rifle with a scope.

CAPTION: But the rain makes visibility terrible, and the weather forecast says it's supposed to keep up all week.

CAPTION: Markham knows Brewster will need to get in close, which means he'll lead Markham right to the target. Markham just needs to make sure he gets to her first.

PAGE 15, Panel Two

We're in Markham's car, and through his windshield we can see Brewster's car parked up ahead on the side of the road.

CAPTION: Brewster leads him to a quiet neighborhood a few miles outside town.

CAPTION: Markham parks half a block behind Brewster.

PAGE 15, Panel Three

A woman in her late 20s comes out the front door of one of the houses. She's holding an umbrella.

NO COPY

PAGE 15, Panel Four

Brewster gets out of his car, and from this angle we can see that he's parked right in front of the woman's house. She's walking from her front door towards him.

NO COPY

PAGE 15, Panel Five

Markham's car comes hurtling down the street, at great speed.

NO COPY

PAGE 16

PAGE 16, Panel One

Markham stops the car in the street right next to Brewster, who's on the passenger side of Markham's car. The passenger-side window of Markham's car is down, and Markham is

yelling out of it. We can see that Brewster clearly has a gun in his hand.

MARKHAM: Brewster!

PAGE 16, Panel Two

Markham fires his pistol -- equipped with a silencer -- through the passenger-side window, hitting Brewster in the face.

SFX: =FFT=

PAGE 16, Panel Three

The woman screams.

WOMAN: OH MY GOD!!

PAGE 16, Panel Four

Markham aims his gun at her.

MARKHAM: Get in.

MARKHAM: Now.

PAGE 16, Panel Five

Close on the woman's face, terrified.

NO COPY

PAGE 17

PAGE 17, Panel One

Cut to Markham's car, racing down the highway in the rain.

FROM CAR: The Marshals. You need to take me to the Marshals. I'm a protected witness. They have --

PAGE 17, Panel Two

Cut inside the car, with Markham at the wheel and the woman in the passenger seat. She's still very scared. Markham is calm and cool.

MARKHAM: You can't go to the Marshals. There's a leak in their department. That's how Brewster found you. The man who hired Brewster will keep sending people until they get you.

MARKHAM: You put a very important person in jail with your testimony, and he's got a lot of friends. So I need to make you disappear.

WOMAN: Who ARE you? Why are you doing this?

PAGE 17, Panel Three

Close on Brewster, behind the wheel.

MARKHAM: ...

MARKHAM: It's complicated.

PAGE 17, Panel Four

Cut to Markham and the woman in a small airport terminal. He's handing her an envelope.

CAPTION: Markham buys the woman three plane tickets, to three different destinations. He tells her to pick a place, and go. He doesn't want to know where.

CAPTION: He also gives her \$10,000, a good start on a new life.

CAPTION: From here on out, she's on her own. There will be no Marshals to check in on her, no US Attorneys needing her testimony.

CAPTION: She'll be a blank slate, and he tells her to make the most of it.

PAGE 17, Panel Five

The woman hugs Markham with great emotion and he just stands there, arms at his side, totally not used to this type of interaction.

CAPTION: As he turns to leave she touches his arm and then does something no one has done to Markham in a long, long time.

PAGE 18

PAGE 18, Panel One

Cut to Markham and Max, sitting on a bench at Kerry Park in Seattle, in the daytime.

MAX: You hear about Brewster?

MARKHAM: Yeah. Shame.

MARKHAM: What about the girl?

MAX: In the wind.

PAGE 18, Panel Two

Markham looks at Max with a sideways glance, trying not to give away how interested he is in the answer to his question.

MARKHAM: Any idea what happened?

PAGE 18, Panel Three

On Max, looking out at the city, not making eye contact with Markham.

MAX: Nope. But Mr. Novak is PISSED.

MAX: If he finds out who interfered there's gonna be HELL to pay.

PAGE 18, Panel Four

Now we're on Markham, his expression not betraying what he really knows.

MARKHAM: Well if I hear anything, I'll be sure to let you know.

PAGE 19

PAGE 19, Panel One

Cut to a nighttime establishing shot of the Smith Tower, Markham's residence.

NO COPY

PAGE 19, Panel Two

Inside, Markham and Sutton are each enjoying a glass of wine.

SUTTON: So you're not going to kill people anymore.

MARKHAM: Not for money. And not if I can help it. But I guess I've got no problem with killing to save a life.

MARKHAM: Although honestly, I've got no problem with killing, period.

MARKHAM / small: I just don't like where it leads.

PAGE 19, Panel Three

On just Sutton.

SUTTON: So ... how did it feel? To save someone?

PAGE 19, Panel Four

On just Markham, looking at Sutton.

MARKHAM: You're a doctor. You've saved me more than once.

PAGE 19, Panel Five

Back on Sutton.

SUTTON: Yeah, but I'm asking you how it felt FOR YOU.

PAGE 19, Panel Six

A long shot on both of them, maybe in silhouette?

MARKHAM: Honestly?

MARKHAM: I didn't feel anything.

PAGE 20

PAGE 20, Panel One

Cut to a shot of Brewster, lying in a hospital bed, hooked up to all kinds of machines. His face is completely bandaged so we can't recognize him in this panel.

NO COPY

PAGE 20, Panel Two

Max enters the room.

MAX: Hey, Brewster?

MAX: It's me, Max.

PAGE 20, Panel Three

Max stands next to Brewster's bed.

MAX: Listen, Mr. Novak is real sorry about how this all went down. And he's gonna do whatever he can to make things right with you.

PAGE 20, Panel Four

Closer in on Max, looking sinister.

MAX: Starting with the name of the guy who shot you.

CAPTION: To Be Continued...