

THE RAFTMAN'S RAZOR

By Keith Bearden & Joel Haskard

FADE IN

SERIES UP SHOTS

-The cover of a comic book, "THE RAFTMAN'S RAZOR."

-Color comic-book illustrations of a sea-worn, sun-burned middle-aged man in a yellow raft, lost at sea.

STUART (V.O.)

The Raftman was a comic book hero perpetually lost at sea in an inflatable rubber raft. There were no oars, clothes, water jugs or food in the raft.

This, of course, was part of the genius of the Raftman.

SERIES OF SHOTS

The first few panels of a RAFTMAN'S RAZOR comic book.

STUART (V.O.)

Each issue began exactly the same way—he'd wake up, rub his eyes, and then shave with this pearl-handled straight razor. Then he would think a single thought, this little balloon over his head.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE RAFTMAN & HIS THOUGHT BALLOONS

- "Chaos is the soil in which truth grows."

- "God smiles only on the inanimate."

- "Life is a series of meaningless poses."

SERIES OF SHOTS

-Images from different issues showing The Raftman, motionless in his raft, staring blankly. Pages flip.

STUART (V.O.)

The amazing thing about the Raftman comics was absolutely nothing happened after he was done shaving. Just him staring at the ocean for the next 30 odd pages.

CUT TO

INT. JESSE'S HOUSE/BEDROOM

Two boys lie on a bed holding the comic in front of their faces. One, STUART WAINRIGHT is a 15 year-old sullen sophomore in a worn army trench coat. JESSE PULASKI is shorter, a freshman, with glasses that are holdovers from grammar school.

STUART (V.O.)

Me and my buddy Jesse? Well, we were hooked.

CUT TO

EXT. MINI MALL - DAY

The boys pull up on their bicycles. They stop in front of a little news store.

STUART (V.O.)

Every third Friday we'd rush to the store to buy the new Raftman.

CUT TO

COMIC BOOK PANELS

THE RAFTMAN'S RAZOR and then, in contrast, panels from older, more clichéd BOFF! POW! style comic books (BATMAN, SUPERMAN, ETC.)

STUART (V.O.)

It was perfect. Just what we wanted. No arch-enemies or capes or any of that bullshit, just this weird guy in an inflatable raft. With a razor!

CUT TO

JESSE'S FAMILY PORTRAIT

Jesse's is a staged Sears Portrait Studio-type shot of his mother, father (both about 45-50), older sister and him.

STUART'S FAMILY PORTRAIT

Stuart's is a candid snapshot taken in front of the family pickup truck. It is his mother (complete with beer and smokes), him, and CHUCK, older and in the army.

STUART (V.O.)
Our parents...worried.

CUT TO

INT. JESSE'S DAD'S HOME OFFICE

JESSE'S DAD, rotund and bald, sits examining the comic with his reading glasses on.

STUART (V.O.)
"Unhealthy and just plain stupid."
That's what Jesse's dad told us when we showed him a copy. "He just sits there. Why do you like this? What do you two want to be when you grow up, bums or Buddhists or something?"

CUT TO

INT. CENTERVILLE HIGH CLASSROOM - DAY

Stuart sits in the back of his "Marriage & Health" class, bored. Class posters show a Bird, a Bee, and body parts. He is the only boy in the class. The TEACHER calls upon him to answer a question.

STUART (V.O.)
We'd say Raftman's thoughts to anybody, at anytime, just give us an excuse, and when you're fifteen, you can think of a million excuses to say-
(giving his answer)
"life is a series of meaningless poses"

Needless to say, everyone in class is confused.

STUART (V.O.)
(continuing)
-or at least me and Jesse could.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-CLOSE UP of Jesse reading.

-DREAM: Stu and Jesse in swimgear, hitchhiking with a sign that reads "OCEAN". They have fake long white beards.

-More close ups of the Raftman.

STUART (V.O.)
We studied Raftman by day and had Raftman dreams by night. Would he use the razor on the raft or himself? Would he be rescued? Would we ever really know anything?

CUT TO

COMIC BOOK PANEL/ARTIST'S SIGNATURE

STUART (V.O.)
The artist's signature was illegible. It looked like one of those squiggles you see on the subway. Vaguely foreign, Oriental maybe.

CUT TO

EXT. SCHOOL BLEACHERS - DAY

Jesse types on a manual typewriter while chewing gum. Stu looks on, opening a bag of peanuts.

STUART (V.O.)
We wrote the publishing company a long letter pledging our eternal devotion and requesting information.

Offered some, Jesse unwittingly eats the nuts with gum still in his mouth. He grimaces and spits out the wad of yech.

CUT TO

MAILBOX - DAY

A single postcard waits inside and Stuart reaches in to retrieve it.

STUART (V.O.)

We received a postcard two weeks later, useless but completely delightful-

POSTCARD

Typewritten message-"THERE IS CURRENTLY NO INFORMATION OF THE WHEREABOUTS OF RAFTMAN."

"THE RAFTMAN'S RAZOR"

A panel showing The Raftman with a gull flying overhead.

STUART (V.O.)

Then issue # 4: the Raftman thinks nothing while shaving, and then, on page 17, a gull flies by. He doesn't seem to notice it.

INT. JESSE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Stu and Jesse—both reading issue No.4 of THE RAFTMAN'S RAZOR—shocked, excited, going nuts.

STUART (V.O.)

But we sure did.

INT. DRUGSTORE - DAY

Jesse feeds money into the store photocopier. Stu is taking copies out and handing them to barely pubescent boys waiting in line. They hand him a dollar, he gives

them a page and they walk away. He repeats this with every boy in line.

STUART (V.O.)

Jesse copied pages from his older sister's diary and we sold them to some kids from the junior high...

STORE COUNTER

A young hand passes money to an old hand. Numerous copies of THE RAFTMAN'S RAZOR are spread along the counter.

STUART (V.O.)

...and we used the money to buy up all the remaining copies.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-Stu and Jesse pouring through a pile of encyclopedias.

-Pictures of gulls.

-Stu and Jesse looking intense.

STUART (V.O.)

We read all we could about herring gulls. We figured that's what they had to be—and concluded that Raftman was in the Atlantic Ocean, somewhere between thirty miles to several feet from land!

SERIES OF SHOTS

Backwards walking, eating hot dogs, shopping cart rides, blanks stares.

STUART (V.O.)

The power of having this much information made us drunk; that day ran into a blur. We were sure that next issue all hell would break loose.

INT. JESSE'S BEDROOM

Jesse is playing with a "clackers" two-balls-on-a-string skill toy, and both of them are engrossed in their re-examination of THE RAFTMAN'S RAZOR.

STUART (V.O.)

He was going to use the razor, we could feel it. We spent most of the next three weeks re-examining our relationship with Raftman.

THE RAFTMAN'S RAZOR COMIC

We re-examine the face and body of The Raftman.

STUART (V.O.)

We finally admitted that we knew nothing. He was, after all, a superhero, and superheroes, like angels and ghosts, moved through the world unbound by logic or science.

INT. JESSE'S BEDROOM

Stu and Jesse facing each other cross-legged on Jesse's bed, comics in hand.

STUART (V.O.)

Finally, the third Friday rolled around.

Anxious, they look at each other, count to three, and together open the comic book.

The first page of #5 is a full-page illustration of the razor floating on the ocean, with a thought balloon coming from it. Jesse turns the pages. They are all identical to the first.

STUART (V.O.)

He was gone. The raft was gone. There was only the razor floating on the water. And it was thinking!

THE RAZOR'S THOUGHT BALLOON

- "ONCE FORGOTTEN, WE ARE TRULY PERFECT."

EXT. DRIVEWAY OF STUART'S HOUSE - DUSK

Stu leaning against a car up on blocks, reading the comic and sneaking a smoke. He hands tools to his brother Chuck, immersed in the engine.

STUART (V.O.)

Back at my house, I checked the other issues and saw what we had always missed-

THE RAFTMAN'S RAZOR COMIC

Once again, the Raftman thinking his solitary thoughts.

STUART (V.O.)

-the thought came from the razor pressed against the Raftman's cheek, not the Raftman.

EXT. DESERTED RURAL ROAD - DAY

The boys are walking the side of the road, in sombreros and fake bandito mustaches. They are tying the laces of sneakers together, and trying to throw them so they will catch on the roadside power lines.

STUART (V.O.)

I have to admit we kinda felt cheated. It was obvious afterwards that the whole concept was just a game to some comic book artist in the big city who would never know how important this loser on the raft was to us two small town geeks.

INT. CAR - DAY

Stu & Jesse are sitting in the front seat of a car, in bandito getup and chewing on cigars. The CAMERA SLOWLY

PULLS BACK to reveal that they are sitting in an abandoned car in the middle of a junkyard.

STUART (V.O.)

Soon, though, we realized lotsa people could get wrapped up in things that they knew deep down weren't real.

EXT. LAKE - SUMMER DAY

Stu and Jesse are on homemade stilts walking to the river's edge. Jesse is the first to make it to the dock. He stands triumphant for a moment, then teeters and falls in. Stu stilt-walks to the edge, pauses. Then he raises his arms, screams, and jumps in, stilts and all.

STUART (V.O.)

Looking back, I'm not sure why it was such an obsession with us. I guess we could relate more to a pathetic guy dying at sea than some supercharged jock in long johns trying to save the world. When you're 15, most of the time you're not sure the world is worth saving.

That was right before the year that everything changed. And, of course, the last we ever saw of the Raftman.

FADE OUT