

IN THE ROARING HEART OF THE CRUCIBLE, STEEL IS MADE. IN THE RAGING FLAME OF PERSONAL TRAGEDY, MEN ARE SOMETIMES FORGED INTO SOMETHING MORE THAN HUMAN.

SO IT WAS WITH RICHARD HENRY BENSON.

A MILLIONAIRE, AN ADVENTURER, A HUNTER-- HE WAS STILL FLESH AND BLOOD.

BUT AFTER THE DREAD LOSS INFLICTED ON HIM BY AN INHUMAN CRIME RING, HE BECAME A MACHINE OF VENGEANCE. A FIGURE OF ICE AND STEEL, MORE PITILESS THAN EITHER, CONCEALING GENIUS AND POWER BEHIND A FACE AS DEAD AND PLIABLE AS A MASK FROM THE GRAVE.

ONLY BENSON'S EYES, LIKE PALE-GRAY FIRE, HINT AT THE DEADLY SCOURGE THE UNDERWORLD INVOKED AGAINST ITSELF--

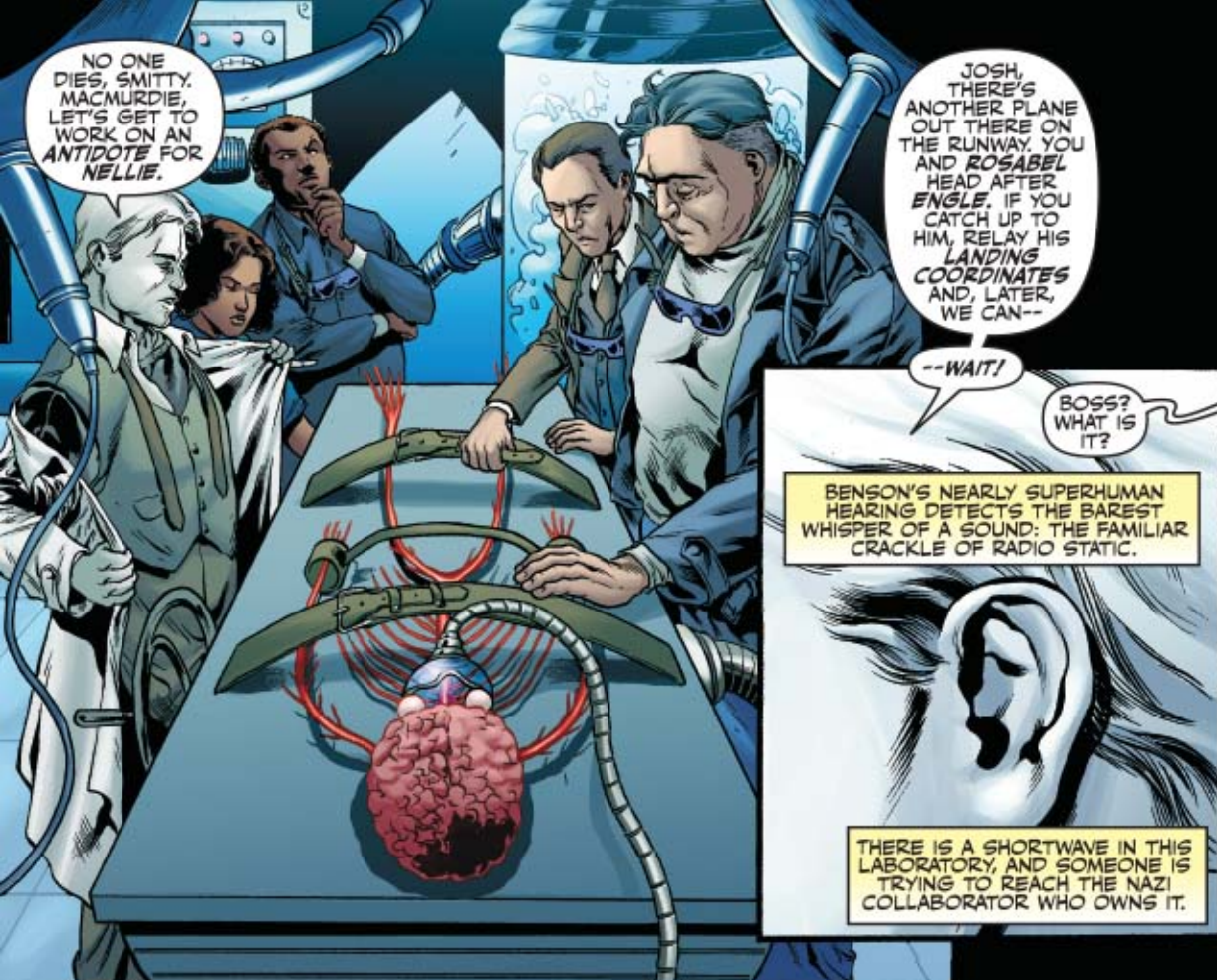
--WHEN CRIME'S GREED TURNED RICHARD HENRY BENSON INTO THE AVENGER.

**PREVIOUSLY:** A PRO-NAZI INDUSTRIALIST NAMED ENGLE HAS DEVELOPED A GAS THAT MAKES PEOPLE AND OBJECTS ALL BUT INVISIBLE. USING IT AGAINST BENSON AND HIS CREW, ENGLE HAS ADMITTED THE GAS'S CHILLING FLAW: IT CAUSES MADNESS AND, INEVITABLY, DEATH.

# THE INVISIBLE DEATH

## CHAPTER FOUR: FLIGHT OF MADNESS





NO ONE DIES, SMITTY. MACMURDIE, LET'S GET TO WORK ON AN ANTIDOTE FOR NELLIE.

JOSH, THERE'S ANOTHER PLANE OUT THERE ON THE RUNWAY. YOU AND ROSABEL HEAD AFTER ENGLE. IF YOU CATCH UP TO HIM, RELAY HIS LANDING COORDINATES AND, LATER, WE CAN--

--WAIT!

BOSS? WHAT IS IT?

BENSON'S NEARLY SUPERHUMAN HEARING DETECTS THE BAREST WHISPER OF A SOUND: THE FAMILIAR CRACKLE OF RADIO STATIC.

THERE IS A SHORTWAVE IN THIS LABORATORY, AND SOMEONE IS TRYING TO REACH THE NAZI COLLABORATOR WHO OWNS IT.

"ALCHIMIE." GERMAN FOR "ALCHEMY." ENGLE'S ALLIES ARE CALLING.

ALCHIMIE-AGENT! REAGIEREN SIE!

GAMBLING, BENSON CONSTRICTS THE MUSCLES IN HIS THROAT AND EMITS A NEAR-PERFECT IMITATION OF ENGLE'S SHRILL VOICE IN FLAWLESS GERMAN.

FOR LONG, ANXIOUS MINUTES, THE AVENGER'S AIDES WAIT IN SILENCE WHILE THEIR CHIEF CONDUCTS HIS RADIO MASQUERADE IN A LANGUAGE MOST OF THEM DO NOT COMPREHEND. THE DELAY IS ROUGHEST ON ALGERNON HEATHCOTE SMITH, WHOSE CLOSEST COMPANION LIES NEAR DEATH.

WHAT IN THE WORLD'S HE SAYIN'?

SOMETHING ABOUT NAVAL BASES! SHHH!



ALL AT ONCE, THE MASQUERADE ENDS. THE AVENGER'S CHILL GAZE WHIPS FROM AIDE TO AIDE AS HE CONVEYS A SERIES OF URGENT ORDERS.











WE'LL NEVER WORK OUR MIRACLE ON THIS CRATE, CHIEF. IT'S LIKE PLAYIN' FOOTBALL IN A PHONE BOOTH.

WE HAVE TO TRY, MAC.

HOW ARE YOU HOLDING UP, SMITTY?

AH. I'M...I JUST...

FEEL USELESS?

THAT'S IT. HOW DID YOU KNOW?

HOW DO YOU *THINK*? JOSH IS MY HUSBAND. WE'RE BOTH ON THIS TEAM, AND WE BOTH KNOW HOW IT FEELS WHEN THAT SPECIAL PERSON IS IN DANGER.

THIS ISN'T LIKE THAT, ROSABEL. NELLIE'S OUT OF MY LEAGUE, ANYWAY. I JUST...SHE'S MY TEAM-MATE. I'D FEEL THIS WAY ABOUT ANY OF YOU.



RIGHT.

CHIEF, I SEE IT! ENGEL'S PLANE!



THIS MIGHT DO IT, MAC. GIVE IT A TRY.

GET AS CLOSE ABOVE ENGEL AS YOU CAN, JOSH. EVERYONE ELSE, HOLD ON TIGHT.