

SKINWORMS

by Christopher Howard Wolf

PAGE ONE

Panel One - Int. Lobby, Apartment Building - Morning

This is a swanky-looking lobby in a high-rise apartment building. The paintings on the walls, plush furniture here, fresh flowers, and the uniformed DOOR MAN here show that this is a place for people of means. Walking through the lobby here is DAN, a middle-aged, slimy-looking man in a business suit and tie. He totes a briefcase.

CAPTION: DAN PLUNKETT: Unmarried, unattached, unloved, and yet somehow capable of "selling sun block to an Indian".

Panel Two - Int. Lobby, Apartment Building - Continuous

The Doorman tips his hat to Dan as he passes and holds the door open. Dan makes finger-guns at the Doorman and shoots him a cheesy, unrealistic smile.

CAPTION: His words.

Panel Three - Ext. City Street - Moments Later

Dan is now strolling down the sidewalk as folks pass by. He's almost comically happy as he makes wide, self-assured steps.

CAPTION: Today, Dan has a very important meeting with the BIG BOSS. He's not sweating, though.

Panel Four - Ext. City Street - Continuous

Dan blows right past a bedraggled-looking HOMELESS MAN sitting up against a building. The Homeless Man seems at death's door as he holds an empty hand out toward Dan, who doesn't so much as glance at him.

CAPTION: "Dashing Dan" never sweats!

Panel Five - Ext. City Street - Continuous

Dan breezes by a young woman who looks to be a PROSTITUTE. She can't be of legal age, and seems a bit lost and sad. Dan eyes her awkwardly. Almost like he'd like to take a good look, but... shouldn't.

CAPTION: Especially not today. Today's the day his entire life's work pays off.

PROSTITUTE: Hey, sweetie... got a minute?

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Panel One - Ext. Handai Corp. Headquarters - Moments Later

This is a spotless, ominous-looking skyscraper constructed of jarringly different bright, shining steel and dark black tinted windows. It's sleek, with careful attention paid to blocking all prying eyes. A sign on the side of the building reads: "HANDAI CORP". Dan is standing before the building, about to go to the front doors.

CAPTION: Dashing Dan is the number one salesperson for the Handai Corporation. THIS is where here sells all that sun block to all those Indians.

Panel Two - Int. Lobby, Handai Corp. - Moments Later

This is nasty neat and ultra-sleek lobby within the Handai building. Everything is pretty much black and/or white. Everything has sharp edges, tight lines, and a general sense of expensiveness. There is a DESK here with a pretty young RECEPTIONIST wearing a NECKLACE and EARRINGS. Dan strolls by the desk, as contented as ever, toward some ELEVATOR DOORS here.

RECEPTIONIST: Good Morning, Mr. Plunkett.

DAN: And to you, Jennifer!

Panel Three - Int. Lobby, Handai Corp. - Continuous

Dan is now standing at an elevator door some distance away as the Receptionist looks his way.

RECEPTIONIST: Roxanne...

Panel Four - Int. Elevator, Handai Corp. - Moments Later

Dan is now standing in the elevator here, looking forward. Standing next to him is a dweeby-looking corporate DRONE in similar attire and coke-bottle glasses. The Drone is grinning as he looks sideways at Dan.

DRONE: There he is! The man with the plan.

DAN: Uh... Yeah. I don't really TALK in ELEVATORS. It's just a personal thing.

Panel Five - Int. Elevator, Handai Corp. - Continuous

The Drone stares forward with a smirk.

DRONE: Sourpuss!

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Panel One - Int. Board Room, Handai Corp. - Continuous

This is a large board room with a long, sleek TABLE at its center. CHAIRS surround the table. The only person sitting at the table is the BOSS MAN, who is seated at the head of the table. Dan is walking into the room proudly.

DAN: Ah! I see I'm early!

BIG BOSS: Sit down, Dan.

Panel Two - Int. Board Room, Handai Corp. - Continuous

Dan sits in a chair near the Big Boss. Dan grins widely as the Big Boss looks at him flatly.

DAN: We'll have to wait for the BOARD, right? Before it's official, I mean. It's a formality, of course, since we all KNOW who's getting the PROMOTION.

Panel Three - Int. Board Room, Handai Corp. - Continuous

The Big Boss steeples his fingers and looks at Dan earnestly. Dan seems skeptical.

BIG BOSS: The board isn't coming, Dan. We have to talk.

DAN: Ha! I get it. Hazing the chosen one, right?

Panel Four - Int. Board Room, Handai Corp. - Continuous

The Big Boss doesn't seem to be laughing. Dan is now starting to realize this isn't going his way, and seems a bit distraught.

BIG BOSS: When rumors of your promotion started spreading... we started getting COMPLAINTS. Just a few at first, but... it's not looking GOOD, Dan.

DAN: What? Who?

Panel Five - Int. Board Room, Handai Corp. - Continuous

Dan leans back in his chair as he once again seems self-assured, as if he's just realized something.

DAN: Ohhhh. This is because I was the ONLY one in the ENTIRE office who didn't buy the candy bars Hillary's kid was peddling, right? That's SO petty.

Panel Six - Int. Board Room, Handai Corp. - Continuous

The Big Boss still looks humorless as Dan leans forward again, almost begging him for more information.

BIG BOSS: That's not it, Dan.

DAN: WHAT, THEN?? The fun run? Because I don't feel I should be COMPELLED to give. Charity should be PERSONAL.

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Panel One - Int. Board Room, Handai Corp. - Continuous

Perhaps sensing that this conversation is going down-hill quickly, the Big Boss is getting up from his chair as Dan continues to seem dumbfounded.

BIG BOSS: This conversation is going down-hill. Take some time to get comfortable with this and we'll talk some more.

DAN: Was it when Gerald got CANCER? Because I SWEAR I signed that card, and nobody SAW but I dropped a HUNDRED BUCKS in that donation jar. Anyone who says I didn't has personal vendetta.

Panel Two - Int. Board Room, Handai Corp. - Continuous

The Big Boss stops at the door, his back to Dan as Dan remains seated, now a little bit irate.

DAN: HEY. I'm a great guy. Ask my clients.

Panel Three - Int. Board Room, Handai Corp. - Continuous

The Big Boss looks over his shoulder a bit, his expression as flat as ever.

BIG BOSS: I did, and yes... You're a real PEACH when there's a commission to be had.

Panel Four - Int. Board Room, Handai Corp. - Continuous

We focus on Dan's face as he gets a frustrated, knotted-up expression not unlike that of a toddler whose candy has been taken away.

BIG BOSS: (off panel) Unfortunately, it's your EQUALS who are influencing this decision.

Panel Five - Int. Board Room, Handai Corp. - Continuous

Dan still has the frustrated look as he wipes his forehead with a HANDKERCHIEF.

CAPTION: Alright. Sometimes Dashing Dan SWEATS.

PAGE FIVE

Panel One - Int. Kitchen, Dan's Apartment - Night

This is a small, yet well-kept kitchen in an urban apartment. All the usual accoutrements are here. Sink, stove, etc. Dan, dressed in a pair of SILK PAJAMAS, is standing at a counter here, pouring a steaming TEA KETTLE into a TEA CUP.

CAPTION: Dan is a clever fellow, if you haven't gathered that! Nothing keeps him down. Not for long, anyway.

Panel Two - Int. Kitchen, Dan's Apartment - Continuous

Dan dips a TEA BAG into the steaming tea cup as he looks lost in deep thought, his brow furrowed.

CAPTION: This isn't a setback, it's an opportunity. He had forgotten to glad-hand his unwashed, drooling coworkers. He hadn't greased their palms enough to buy their allegiance, and that would have come back to bite him SOMEDAY.

Panel Three - Int. Kitchen, Dan's Apartment - Continuous

As Dan blows steam off the top of the tea cup, he seems to smirk.

CAPTION: From here on, if he has to lend someone BUS FARE because their CAR won't start... well, that's a very small price to pay for the next promotion, isn't it?

Panel Four - Int. Bedroom, Dan's Apartment - Moments Later

This bedroom is much like the kitchen - modest, but neat. The kind of place you keep when you're meant for better things. Naturally, there is a BED here, along with a NIGHTSTAND with LAMP and various expected furniture. Dan is setting the tea cup down on the nightstand.

DAN: Tomorrow is another day, and another chance to convince 'em... Dan Plunkett is a real humanitarian!

Panel Five - Int. Bedroom, Dan's Apartment - Continuous

Dan is now tucking himself into bed, a satisfied look on his face as if he's solved the very mysteries of the universe.

DAN: Yup. Ol' Dan ranks right up there with the Mahatma Llama!

Panel Six - Int. Bedroom, Dan's Apartment - Continuous

We see Dan's hand now as he turns off the lamp.

SFX: (lamp switch) Klik.

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Panel One - Ext. Run-Down House - Timeless

We now enter Dan's subconscious as he dreams. This is a modest little house, almost a shack, in a rural area outside the city we've seen. The grass is a bit shaggy, the trees are a little sparse, but all in all this looks like it could be a nice place to grow up.

BODYLESS VOICE: (unattached word balloon) I know you're lying, Daniel!

Panel Two - Int. Living Room, Run-Down House - Continuous

This is a spacious, yet largely empty living room, almost as if it takes up most of the house itself. There is a tattered and work SOFA here and a few less-than-new bits of

furniture and appliances. Sitting on the sofa is YOUNG DAN, about six to eight years old. He is looking toward a tall adult off-panel who we cannot see.

YOUNG DAN: I'm nooot!

VOICE: (off panel) Daniel Dean Plunkett, I swear you're the GREEDIEST, most DISHONEST little boy in the WORLD.

Panel Three - Int. Living Room, Run-Down House - Continuous

We focus on Young Dan's face as he looks upward toward whoever this adult is. He seems resolute in the fact he's done nothing wrong.

VOICE: (off panel) I KNOW you're lying! I can see the WORMS.

YOUNG DAN: Nuh-uh!

Panel Four - Int. Living Room, Run-Down House - Continuous

Dan looks at his arms now, as if searching for something on their surface.

VOICE: (off panel) Yup, those SKINWORMS are moving all around! Every time you lie, they keep coming back. Tell enough lies, and one'll get big enough to swallow you WHOLE!

Panel Five - Int. Living Room, Run-Down House - Continuous

Young Dan is now studying his leg as he pulls up his pant leg. He seems intent to find what he's looking for.

YOUNG DAN: I'M. NOT. LYING.

Panel Six - Int. Living Room, Run-Down House - Continuous

Young Dan suddenly stops looking at his skin, his eyes wide as if he's just made a bad mistake.

VOICE: (off panel) So why are you LOOKING for them, then?

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Panel One - Int. Living Room, Run-Down House - Continuous

We now see the adult Young Dan was looking at. It's a tremendous, vile-looking, slime-drooling, rubbery-skinned WORM CREATURE with tentacles around its toothless, circular maw.

WORM: (distorted word balloon) WHY ARE YOU LOOKING, DANIEL?

Panel Two - Int. Living Room, Run-Down House - Continuous

This is a large panel wherein we see the ADULT Dan sitting on the sofa in the same silk pajamas we saw earlier. He is terrified as he tries to fight off the giant worm, its tentacles ensnaring him as it tries to swallow him whole!

DAN: EEYEAAAHHH!!

Panel Three - Int. Bedroom, Dan's Apartment - Presently

We are now in the "real world" as Dan sits upright in his bed, screaming in terror!

DAN: AAAAAAHH!

Panel four - Int. Bedroom, Dan's Apartment - Continuous

Still a bit scared, Dan looks down at his blanket. The entire bed around him is SOAKED with SWEAT.

CAPTION: Dan actually seems to be sweating rather a LOT lately, wouldn't you say?

PAGE EIGHT

Panel One - Int. Kitchen, Dan's Apartment - Morning

Dan is now once again dressed in a sharp suit as he stands at the same kitchen counter. His briefcase is on the counter, open, as he holds a brown paper BAG as if he's about to put it in said briefcase. The bag is clearly marked "DAN". He seems a bit uneasy.

CAPTION: DAN PLUNETT: New man! Won't everyone be surprised? At the end of the day, nobody will know WHAT to think, anymore!

Panel Two - Int. Kitchen, Dan's Apartment - Continuous

Dan closes the briefcase. As he does, he smiles once again, almost as widely as he has before.

CAPTION: Here, let Dashing Dan pay for that cup of coffee. Relax, Dan will run those files down to accounting. Hey - your son's in intensive care? Let Dan loan him a kidney!

Panel Three - Int. Kitchen, Dan's Apartment - Continuous

This is a close shot of Dan's mouth as he smiles even wider. It's a cheesy, almost evil grin exposing way too many pearly white teeth.

CAPTION: You can keep it right up until Dan gets that corner office.

Panel Four - Int. Lobby, Apartment Building - Moments Later

Dan is once again walking through the lobby of his building, toward the Doorman, who waves to him.

DOORMAN: You look even happier than usual today, Mr. Plunkett!

Panel Five - Int. Lobby, Apartment Building - Continuous

Dan stops to chat with the Doorman, something he's probably never done before - but you wouldn't know it by the ease with which he approaches the uniformed man.

DAN: Thanks! It's because I LOVE my JOB.

DOORMAN: Ah! Me too, sir! Me too!

Panel Six - Int. Lobby, Apartment Building - Continuous

We see a close shot of the Doorman's grinning face as a horde of WORMS wriggle and squirm just beneath his skin! The Doorman seems completely unaware of this, and wears a carefree expression.

DOORMAN: Twelve years, I've worked here... wouldn't want to be anywhere else!

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Panel One - Int. Lobby, Apartment Building - Continuous

Everything is back to normal now as Dan backs away from the Doorman with a start. It's clear he's seen a fleeting glimpse of something that couldn't possibly be real.

DAN: AH!

DOORMAN: Sir? Was it something I said?

Panel Two - Ext. City Street - Moments Later

Dan is walking down the sidewalk once again, but isn't as confident as he has been in the past. Still, he seems more curious about what just happened than afraid of it. He doesn't really accept what his eyes told him.

CAPTION: Dashing Dan obviously needs more sleep.

Panel Three - Ext. City Street - Continuous

Dan now stops suddenly next to the Homeless Man, who is once again holding out his empty hand.

HOMELESS MAN: Plss...? Plss...?

Panel Four - Ext. City Street - Continuous

Dan is now going through his WALLET, which is full of CASH. He seems to have completely shaken any odd feelings as he once again grins.

DAN: Ah! The perfect opportunity for some PRACTICE. I assume you're not going to use this money for DRUGS, correct?

Panel Five - Ext. City Street - Continuous

We see Dan's hand as he holds exactly ONE DOLLAR out over the Homeless Man's outstretch hand. A horde of small WORMS are wriggling and writhing beneath the skin of the Homeless Man's hand! A few worms even poke out of the flesh, as if reaching for the dollar!

HOMELESS MAN: (off panel) Nah, nah, jus' FOOD, man.

Panel Six - Ext. City Street - Continuous

Dan jumps back from the Homeless Man, the dollar bill floating free from his hand. He is absolutely horrified, realizing there is most definitely something WRONG with either the world, or his mind.

DAN: GAHH!

HOMELESS MAN: Whthe Hell, man?

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Panel One - Ext. City Street - Continuous

Dan is now sprinting down the sidewalk, a look of terror on his face. It's clear, though, that he simply thinks he can briskly walk away from his problems.

CAPTION: DAN PLUNKETT: Probably losing his mind.

DAN: Liars... liars... Just the mind playing tricks.

Panel Two - Ext. City Street - Continuous

Dan once again passes the young Prostitute. He's already past her, crouching as he runs, and covering his head with his hand as if shielding his brain from something. The Prostitute watches him pass, her MOUTH now a clutch of TENTACLES and a gaping maw not unlike the giant worm from Dan's dream!

PROSTITUTE: Hey, you're HANDSOME.

DAN: AAHH, DAMN!

Panel Three - Ext. Handai Corp. Headquarters - Moments Later

Dan now SHOVES an elderly man aside as he RUNS to the front doors of the building.

CAPTION: There's a certain amount of SANITY in ROUTINE. Whatever's plaguing poor Dan's MIND will surely be soothed by the safe structure of an honest day's work.

Panel Four - Int. Lobby, Handai Corp. - Moments Later

Dan is now rushing past the desk as the Receptionist talks to him.

RECEPTIONIST: Good morning, Mr. Plunkett.

DAN: Th-thanks. Same to you, Jennifer.

Panel Five - Int. Lobby, Handai Corp. - Continuous

Dan is now facing the elevator doors, standing quite stiff and stoically. His face is almost a death's mask of dread.

Panel Six - Int. Lobby, Handai Corp. - Continuous

This is the same exact shot as above, but Dan is looking out of the corner of his wide eyes, toward where the Receptionist would be.

RECEPTIONIST: (off panel) I heard about that promotion, by the way. That was unfair.

PAGE ELEVEN

Panel One - Int. Lobby, Handai Corp. - Continuous

Dan is in shock in the foreground as we look past him to the Receptionist's desk. The Receptionist has completely transformed into the Giant Worm from Dan's dream, and is slithering over the desk toward him! The Giant Worm wears the Receptionist's jewelry.

WORM: (distorted word balloon) YOU REALLY DESERVED IT.

DAN: *GASP*

Panel Two - Int. Lobby, Handai Corp. - Continuous

Suddenly, the elevator doors open! Dan is about to jump into the elevator.

SFX: (elevator) DING!

Panel Three - Int. Elevator, Handai Corp. - Continuous

Dan is now feverishly pressing one of the elevator's buttons as the door slowly closes.

DAN: Come one! COME ON!

Panel Four - Int. Elevator, Handai Corp. - Continuous

We now see the closed elevator doors as spindly TENTACLES worm their way through the closed center between the doors. SLIME is also drooling through.

SFX: (SLIME) Squitt

Panel Five - Int. Elevator, Handai Corp. - Continuous

Dan now leans against the back wall of the elevator. He seems absolutely shocked and dismayed by this recent course of events. It's almost as if he's glued to the surface by fear.

Panel Six - Int. Elevator, Handai Corp. - Continuous

This is largely the same shot as Dan looks upward, presumably toward the panel that displays what floor the elevator is on.

SFX: (elevator) Ding!

PANEL TWELVE

Panel One - Int. Elevator, Handai Corp. - Continuous

The doors are open now as the Drone from earlier in the story steps into the elevator with Dan. The Drone seems to be us his usual upbeat, smirking self.

DAN: Please...

Panel Two - Int. Elevator, Handai Corp. - Continuous

Dan and the Drone are now side by side in the elevator. Dan is still more or less frozen in place.

DAN: Please don't talk to me.

Panel Three - Int. Elevator, Handai Corp. - Continuous

This is the same panel as above. Everything is silent.

Panel Four - Int. Elevator, Handai Corp. - Continuous

This is the same panel as above. The Drone speaks.

DRONE: I'm not saying a word.

Panel Five - Int. Elevator, Handi Corp. - Continuous

The Drone's face contorts, tentacles and slime spilling from his twisted and malformed mouth as his skin seems to putrefy and become worm-like. His coke bottle glasses are askew.

CAPTION: Oh, well. Dan is sweating again.

Panel Six - Ext. Elevator, Handai Corp. - Continuous

This is the outside of the elevator doors. There is no one around, and nothing seems out of the ordinary.

CAPTION: He tastes really salty.

CAPTION: END.