

FALLING MAN

by Jeff Goldberg

Steve Kramer was a brilliant young artist on the scene in New York in the 70s when I was starting out as a writer. He built little electronic dioramas displaying stuffed rats in various bizarre settings. Flip the switch and they would get fried in a little rat-sized electric chair, or hump in the back seat of a little rat-sized convertible. Darkly funny ingenious work. No wonder Kramer eventually went into advertising. He was brilliant, but he was also an alcoholic and while drinking at a rooftop party in Soho, he fell off the ledge four stories down onto an airshaft. Miraculously he survived, but with just about every bone in his body broken.

About six months later I saw him at Micky Ruskin's club One-University. He was drinking sparkling water, hobbling around on crutches, and almost unrecognizable. The plastic surgeons had rebuilt his face along with everything else. It wasn't hideous, just not Kramer's face anymore.

We started talking. I asked him: "On the way down, what were you thinking?"

He thought briefly, then quietly replied, "How far?"

