

MILESTONE FOREVER

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Script for 96 Pages  
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**Page**

Black page. DHARMA'S VISION BUBBLES are visible at the edges of the pages. There will be *lots* of type down the center of the page, so put the globes mostly around the edges, almost like a border but not so obviously.

TYPESET CAPTION

*"Sometimes I have a dream. I am in the cave in Plato's Republic sitting on the cold ground, my hands and feet bound in iron chains. Through an opening at the end of the cave, I see a turnstile and a neon sign. It flashes 'World's Oldest Operating Metaphor'. This does not, however, appear to be a very popular attraction anymore."*

—Jeremy Levin

TYPESET CAPTION

*"The secret to Funk is to pay attention."*

—George Clinton

**Page**

**&**

**Page**

DOUBLE PAGE SPLASH.

The page is almost entirely BLACK, broken up by different-sized Dharma VISION GLOBES, floating in the mostly empty blackness. These globes each have a picture of a different Milestone Hero inside, usually head and shoulder shots. We see ICON, HARDWARE, STATIC, XOMBI, KOBALT, DMZ, KWAI, DONNER, BLITZEN, DEATHWISH, et cetera, all inside individual globes. This could be pick up art from old Milestone comics, if that eases the artist's load. DHARMA'S HAND holds one of the globes.

LOGO  
MILESTONE® FOREVER

**Page  
&  
Page**

DOUBLE PAGE SPLASH

DHARMA dominates the composition, brooding in the darkness of Shadowspire, his hand still holding the globe from the Previous page. Around him floats various-sized VISION GLOBES. In the globes are images of HARDWARE, ROCKET, STATIC, DEATHWISH, CATHOLIC GIRL, IOTA, ORO, PAGE, BRICKHOUSE, et cetera. Leave room for too many captions.

DHARMA CAPTION

I am **Dharma**. It is about to begin...

DHARMA CAPTION

What's done is done, what **will** be done is done.

DHARMA CAPTION

The entirety of history, past, present and future, is an open book to me.

DHARMA CAPTION

All except for one maddening page.

DHARMA CAPTION

This is my power. And my curse:  
A single moment in all of  
history that *I cannot see*.

DHARMA CAPTION

And beyond that moment, I see  
only doom.

TITLE

"Meta Fictions"

BOTTOM CAPTION

(typeset)

*"Time forks, perpetually into  
countless futures. In one of  
them, I am your enemy."*

—Jorge Luis Borges

**Page**

Panel 1

Close on Dharma's face. He's looking at a large  
Vision Globe, filled with FIRE. His face is lit by  
the light from the fire.

DHARMA CAPTION

My omniscience is marred by a  
**blind spot**. But after that  
lapse, the future is clear.

Panel 2

Closer on the Globe. We can see the Earth floating in space,  
over half-consumed in fire.

DHARMA CAPTION

*Dhosha. The great Evil.  
Suffering. **Fire**. The death of a  
Universe.*

Panel 3

Wider, Dharma thrusts the fiery globe away from  
himself.

DHARMA CAPTION

And I alone am responsible.

**Page**

Panel 1

Closer, Dharma's head hangs in frustration. We can  
see other globes, hovering about.

DHARMA CAPTION

But how? A decision I make? A  
decision I **fail** to make?

DHARMA CAPTION

I do not know.

Panel 2

Vision Globes swarm around Dharma, who has regained his composure.

DHARMA CAPTION

Nevertheless, I have **prepared** for this day.

Panel 3

A thoughtful Dharma is surrounded by Vision Globes of STATIC, WISE SON BOOGIEMAN, IRON BUTTERFLY, AQUAMARIA, THIRD RAIL.

DHARMA CAPTION

I have gathered around myself beings of great power, in the hope that one of them might be able to **stop** me, should that be required.

**Page**

Panel 1

Big panel. Dharma looks at a Vision Globe with an image from THE BIG BANG (perhaps one of John Paul's panels from Static #1, with the gas everywhere and gangbangs running).

DHARMA CAPTION

For I have **already** done evil in the name of a **greater good**.

DHARMA CAPTION

At the "Big Bang" I killed hundreds of innocents, in order to create a mere handful of potential heroes.

Panel 2

Dharma is looking at globes with Static, Icon, Rocket, Hardware, Xombi and Kobalt.

DHARMA CAPTION

Perhaps it will be one of my own creations that saves me. Or ruins me.

Panel 3

Dharma's reaching for the Rocket Globe.

DHARMA CAPTION

I am blind to my ultimate  
decision.

Panel 4

Big panel, Dharma holds and views a LARGE VISION  
GLOBE containing an image of ROCKET'S FACE (this is a  
detail from the image from the next page), looking  
down at something off panel. The globe is panel right  
and in the foreground.

DHARMA CAPTION

My hope, slim though it may be,  
is that by observing the **final**  
**fates** of those who could **oppose**  
me, I might somehow deduce my  
own **future**.

DHARMA CAPTION

Time fast-forwards, then plays  
itself out.

DHARMA CAPTION

The future unfolds, as it must...

**Page**

SPLASH

ROCKET, back in her original costume, is standing  
over her Grandmother's GRAVE MARKER (this is not a  
headstone. It's a simple stone plaque, set into the  
ground). The Marker reads AMELIA HYLAND. Flowers left  
on the grave conveniently obscure birth and death  
dates.

ROCKET CAPTION

Although the marker's been down  
for a couple of weeks, this is  
the first I've seen of it. I  
haven't been out much, lately.

ROCKET CAPTION

But that's gotta **stop**. Time to  
shake this thing and get over  
myself.

ROCKET CAPTION

My name is **Raquel Ervin**. When I'm in my work clothes, they call me **Rocket**.

ROCKET CAPTION

And it's past time I got back to business.

OFF-PANEL SPEAKER

Rocket?—

LOGO

ICON

TITLE

"Blood Will Tell"

TYPESET TEXT

*"To dream the fantastic is to dream the dream of the Other."*  
—Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

**Page**

Panel 1

New angle reveals Rocket turning to see FLASHBACK.

FLASHBACK

—I'm really sorry to hear about your grandmother.

ROCKET

**Flashback?** What are you doing here?

Panel 2

Favoring Flashback, a wry smile on her face.

FLASHBACK

Looking for **you**. You haven't been around very much since your grandmother passed. You're about to blow your cover.

Panel 3

On Rocket, surprised.

ROCKET

**Cover**? I don't even know what you're talking about.

Panel 4

Flashback puts a hand on Rocket's shoulder. Rocket is confused.

FLASHBACK

Oh, **please**! I already figured out your so-called secret identity. You think I don't know what you're really up to?

ROCKET

Then **why**...?

Panel 5

Favoring a shrugging Flashback.

FLASHBACK

Cause I **like** you. It's not that big a deal. The Blood Syndicate's **full** of undercovers, these days.

Panel 6

Flashback has her arm around Rocket's shoulders.

FLASHBACK

What we **don't** have enough of are **friends**.

### Page

Panel 1

BIG PANEL. Rocket and Flashback are flying through the sky.

FLASHBACK

Why come you're back to wearing your old costume? Don't you like the one I got you?

Panel 2

Close on Rocket.

ROCKET

I like it fine. It's just ... it seems **right** to wear this now.

FLASHBACK

I don't get it.

Panel 3

On Rocket, grim.

ROCKET

Me either, really. I just got this **feeling**. Like you only get so much time in the world. I want to go out the same way I came in.

Panel 4

Flashback and Rocket are flying away from the camera and towards the FACTORY.

FLASHBACK

Don't get all morbid on me, girl. We both got **plenty** of life left in us.

### Page

Panel 1

Small panel. Exterior CITY HALL.

CAPTION

Dakota City Hall...

TALKING BUILDING

I **can't** say I'm **happy** to see you.—

Panel 2

Big panel. The MAYOR'S OFFICE. MAYOR JEFFERSON is seated calmly behind her desk. She doesn't even look up from her papers. HOLOCAUST is standing in her still-smoldering doorway.

CAPTION

Her Honor, Mayor Thomassina Jefferson, presiding...

MAYOR

—I can't even say I'm  
**surprised**, Leonard.

HOLOCAUST

(signature balloon)

My name is **Holocaust**!

Panel 3

Close on the Mayor, finally looking up from her papers.

MAYOR

You're name is **Leonard**. I named you and if you don't straighten up, I'll **spank** you. **Again**.

Panel 4

On Holocaust's face. His eyes are literally burning.

HOLOCAUST

**Listen** to me, Bitch. Organized crime in this city is **mine**. You keep getting in my way, I'll **do** you, Mother or no.

### Page

Panel 1

Big Flashback panel. Grey tone colors, except for the blood. A TWELVE YEAR OLD LREONARD looks insane, standing over the broken body of his FATHER. Leonard stares at his hands, and the blood that runs down them.

HOLOCAUST CAPTION

"On my twelfth birthday, I killed my no-account father with my own hands."

Panel 2

Back in the Present. Holocaust looms, leaning into the terrified face of the Mayor.

HOLOCAUST

I got no problem completing the set.

Panel 3

New angle, Holocaust reacts to an off-panel speaker.

OFF PANEL ICON

I think you're **projecting**,  
Leonard.—

HOLOCAUST

Who...?

**Page**

Panel 1

Big Panel. New angle reveals cocky ICON.

ICON

—You're not really mad at your  
mother. You're mad at me.

HOLOCAUST

Icon!

Panel 2

The two men face off.

HOLOCAUST

Guess I'm supposed to be so  
pissed that I throw down with  
you here and now? One on one?

Panel 3

Favoring smiling Holocaust.

HOLOCAUST

I got **nothing** to prove to you,  
old man. Just a score to  
settle. But that's **later**. Right  
now, I'm leaving.

**Page**

Panel 1

Icon bars Holocaust's way.

ICON

I don't remember giving you  
**permission** to leave, Lenoard.

Panel 2

Holocaust, his back to the picture window. The sky behind him is filling with fire.

HOLOCAUST

I don't remember **asking**.

Panel 3

Big Panel. The window behind Holocaust EXPLODES INWARD. An enormous fireball just flew in. Holly is a silhouette at the center of the fire. Icon is already moving towards the Mayor.

ICON

(burst)

Get down!

SFX

KA THOOOMM

Panel 4

The Mayor on her knees, covering her head with her hands. Icon crouches over her, protecting her from the fire and falling glass all around them. SILENT PANEL.

**Page**

Panel 1

Wide on the room. Suddenly the fire is gone. So is Holocaust. Don't let us get a good look at the floor. SILENT PANEL.

Panel 2

Closer on Icon and the Mayor, they are standing now, she is shaky, leaning on him for support.

MAYOR

We could have been **killed**!

Panel 3

Favoring a thoughtful Icon.

ICON

No. I doubt it.

Panel 4

Big Panel. Wide on the room from above. Still burning in the carpet is the message: NEXT TIME IS THE LAST TIME!

ICON

He was just leaving me a message.

**Page**

Panel 1

Exterior the Factory.

TALKING BUILDING

That's it, Rocket—

Panel 2

In Flashback's room (it's neat and clean, now). Flashback is holding up a small shoebox full of crack pipes and vials. Rocket looks at it askance.

FLASHBACK

—That's **all** of them.

ROCKET

All?

Panel 3

Rocket is dumping the shoebox in a trash can.

ROCKET

This is a big step, Sara. I'm proud of you.

Panel 4

Rocket BLASTS the garbage can with a bolt of her signature energy. It's vaporized as Flashback looks on.

SFX

ZRRRAKK

Panel 5

Close enough to see Flashback holding up one crack pipe.

FLASHBACK

I kept one, Rocket. To remind  
me not to do it.

Page

Panel 1

Cocking her finger like a toy gun. Rocket fires a  
thin beam of her signature energy at the pipe. It  
shatters in a surprised Flashback's hand.

SFX

PLINK

ROCKET

Tell you what, you **need**  
reminding, you call **me**.  
Anytime.

Panel 2

Flash hugs Rocket, both are smiling.

FLASHBACK

You know, if I want to start  
again, breaking that **pipe** won't  
make any difference.

ROCKET

This is true. How about I break  
your neck?

Panel 3

New angle. Both react to an off-panel speaker.

HOLOCAUST

(off-panel)

It's **time**, Rocket.—

Panel 4

Wide to reveal Holocaust.

HOLOCAUST

—You gotta take a stand.

Panel 5

Holocaust towers over a nervous Rocket, his arm  
around her shoulders.

HOLOCAUST

I'm about to take your  
ex-partner out of the box. I  
gotta know, you still part of  
the Blood Syndicate?

**Page**

Panel 1

On Rocket's face. She looks like she's lying.

ROCKET

Yeah.

Panel 2

Holocaust is looking at Rocket. He doesn't buy her  
story.

OFF-PANEL HOLOCAUST

I owe you a little sump'in  
sump'in for how you helped  
Flashback—

Panel 3

Big Panel. Holocaust is shooting a huge WALL OF FLAME  
at Rocket.

HOLOCAUST

—But girl, you can't **lie** for  
~~444~~!

SFX

FOOOOOSH

Panel 4

Flashback reacts as Rocket is trapped in a huge  
cylinder of flame.

FLASHBACK

(burst)

Holly, **no**!

Panel 5

Holocaust pulls Flashback away from the flame.

HOLOCAUST

She'll be fine, long as she  
don't try to get out. What's  
coming next, I don't want her  
involved.

**Page**

Panel 1

Outside. High in the sky, we're looking down as Icon  
flies through the canons between skyscrapers mid-air,  
puzzled. He's looking for something.

Panel 2

Silent panel. Similar to previous, Icon is gone.

Panel 3

Outside. High in the sky, FADE floats in mid-air,  
puzzled. He's looking for something.

FADE CAPTION

How did he **lose** me? I was right  
behind him.

OFF-PANEL SPEAKER

I'm over here, **Fade**.

Panel 4

New angle reveals Icon, hovering nearby above Fade,  
arms folded confidently.

ICON

If your intent was stealth, you  
failed miserably. And if it was  
to lure me into an ambush, I'm  
**doubly** disappointed.

Panel 5

Favoring Fade.

ICON

You don't belong with  
Holocaust. If you want out, I  
promise I'll help you protect  
your sister.

FADE

I hear you, Icon. But things  
ain't always how we want them  
to be. Sometimes they ain't  
even how they **look**.

**Page**

Panel 1

Fade flies away from Icon, down towards the factory.  
Icon follows behind.

FADE

We both know what has to be  
done. So let's do it.

ICON CAPTION

I had always felt, in my heart  
of hearts, that many of the  
Blood Syndicate had the  
potential to be **heroes**.

Panel 2

Tight as Fade passes through the wall of the Factory.

ICON CAPTION

None, I thought, had more  
potential than this ... temporal  
smear of a man.

Panel 3

Icon lands next to the wall Fade just passed  
harmlessly through.

ICON CAPTION

This isn't the first time I've  
misjudged someone.

Panel 4

Icon blasts a hole in the wall with a one-fisted  
power blast, ala Space Ghost.

ICON CAPTION

Nor, I suppose, will it be the  
last.

SFX

CHOOOMM

Panel 5

From inside, Icon steps through the hole he made.

OFF-PANEL HOLOCAUST

Come in, Icon.—

**Page**

Panel 1

SPLASH. ICON is surrounded by the blood syndicate;  
FADE, FLASHBACK, BOOGIEMAN, TARMACK, BAD BETTY, HARM,  
BUBBASAUR and Holocaust. Captions label the team.

HOLOCAUST

—We were **expecting** you.

HOLOCAUST

Have you met the new BLOOD  
SYNDICATE?

CAPTION

Fade.

CAPTION

Flashback.

CAPTION

Boogieman.

CAPTION

Tarmack.

CAPTION

Bad Betty.

CAPTION

Harm.

CAPTION

Bubbasaur.

**Page**

Panel 1

Closer, a smug Holocaust in Icon's face.

HOLOCAUST

See! You thought **I** was the  
**fool**. But who's here without  
any back-up, **now**?

OFF-PANEL HARDWARE

I give up, Holocaust.—

Panel 2

Holocaust reacts to the towering figure in silhouette  
behind Icon. It's HARDWARE 2.0 but his eyes are the  
only visible detail.

HARDWARE

—Who?

**Page  
&  
Page**

Double page SPLASH

The money shot, this is the last bow of the Dakota  
universe. Make it good. A powerful Icon is backed up  
by an imposing Hardware, a cocky Rocket and a  
crackling STATIC, who is hovering above on his disk.

OFF-PANEL HOLOCAUST

Hardware? Static?—

**Page**

Panel 1

Closer. Holocaust is puzzled by Rocket.

HOLOCAUST

—And **Rocket**? But I left you—

ROCKET

In a column of **fire**. I know. It  
burned through the **floor**,  
Genius.

Panel 2

On a raging Holocaust.

HOLOCAUST

It don't matter. The four of  
you **still** can't beat us all.

OFF PANEL SPEAKER

Five, Holocaust—

Panel 3

Wide to reveal Harm, stepping up to Holocaust.

HARM

—There's **five** of us.

HOLOCAUST

Don't be stupid, **Harm**.

Panel 4

Panel left Holocaust is dressing panel right Harm  
down.

HOLOCAUST

This ain't no time for a power  
play. You're way out of your  
league.

Panel 5

Harm is flashing a badge.

HARM

What I **am**, Dickweed, is a  
**federal agent**. And your fiery  
ass is **busted**.

### Page

Panel 1

Wide. Powerful Holocaust bursts into flames. Harm  
flinches back, but he's still tough.

HOLOCAUST

Don't matter, cop. **None** of you  
got a weapon to stop **me**.

Panel 2

Foreground Icon points at his temple to demonstrate.  
Static is zooming along in the background nearby.

ICON

We have the best weapon of **all**,  
Holocaust. Our **minds**.

STATIC

I'll say! My mind's where I  
keep all my **retorts**.

Panel 3

Static dive bombs down towards Bad Betty, firing  
LIGHTNING BOLTS from his hands.

STATIC

Dibs on the Bionic Woman!

STATIC

Nuhnunuhnuhnuh...Didididididid\*

SFX

shrzzzzk

BOTTOM CAPTION

\* Static's extremely poor  
imitation of a "bionic" sound  
effect.

-Editor

Panel 4

Bad Betty tears the metal floor up in front of her,  
making a shield that blocks Static's lightning.

SFX

KRRREEUNK

STATIC

That is so **cool** when you do  
that! Seriously, how much can  
you lift?

BAD BETTY

Raaagh!

STATIC

What's the matter? You pull something?

**Page**

Panel 1

Hardware is wary, as Tarmack flows towards him, a living wave, with a giant, hate-filled face embedded in it.

HARDWARE

I got **this** one. What's it all about, **Alva**?

ALVA CAPTION

A **moment**, if you **please**.  
Downloading files from Heroes  
**database**... Ah!

Panel 2

Close on Hardware's face, a semi-transparent, holographic image of ALVA'S FACE (The Alva AI), is superimposed, nearby.

ALVA

His *nom de guerre* is **Tarmack**.  
He is a **bang baby**, composed of  
a substance comparable to  
molten tar.

Panel 3

Hardware (no visible Alva) has one Omnicannon ready to fire. Tarmack is congealing into human form, and has one arm molded into the form of a huge sledge hammer. He's going to brain Hardware.

HARDWARE

Then I'll refrain from throwing  
him into the briar patch. Pop  
open a cold one, Alva.

ALVA CAPTION

Cryonic shells loaded, Curtis.

Panel 4

Hardware fires a shell into Tarmak's chest.

ALVA CAPTION  
Omnicanon blast, on target.

SFX  
POOMF

Panel 5

New angle shows Hardware looking at a flash-frozen Tarmack. Icicles drip from him, he was stopped in mid-swing. Alva's head floats nearby.

ALVA  
**Target frozen solid.**

HARDWARE  
Thank God.

ALVA  
If **God** could do the tricks **we**  
can, he'd be a **happy** man.

**Page**

Panel 1

Harm is punching the crap out of Bubbasaur.

SFX  
KRAK

BUBBASAUR  
Raaagh!

Panel 2

Harm stands over the fallen Bubbasaur, nursing the fist he just punched him with.

HARM  
**Nailed** ya, you big, ugly,  
purple-ass Barney wannabe!

HARM  
Now, just give me two rounds  
with the Wiggles and everybody  
gets their DVRs back from the  
toddlers.

Panel 3

Static has Bad Betty trapped in an electrical field, she's a silhouette, writhing in a lightning bolt.

STATIC

(wavy balloon with musical notes inside)

We're going to turn it onnnn!

We're going to bring you the pow-errr!

Panel 4

Static stands over a fallen Bad Betty, small sparks of electrical energy still crackling over her.

STATIC

C'mon Tin-Lizzie! You're not **singing** with me.

BAD BETTY

("weak" balloon)

Uhhhh...

STATIC

Spoilsport.

**Page**

Panel 1

Rocket, fists charged up and ready to blast, faces off with Flashback, who has her palms up, to ward Rocket off.

ROCKET

I wish it didn't have to be like this, Sara.

FLASHBACK

It don't. Just hold up a second!

Panel 2

Holocaust pointing at Icon. He is standing between Fade and Boogieman.

HOLOCAUST

Fade, Boogie! Grab Icon! Hold him while I burn him.

Panel 3

Favoring Icon, trying to calm the situation.

ICON

Stay out if this and you won't be harmed. This is between Holocaust and myself.

OFF-PANEL SPEAKER

Beg to **differ** with you, Big Man.—

Panel 4

On WISE SON. He's bald and hatless but wearing his shades. He's casually leaning against a wall, holding a cap

WISE SON

— This is between Holocaust and **me**.

HOLOCAUST

Wise Son!?!

Panel 5

Wise son is between Icon and Holocaust, looking up into Holocaust's enraged face.

WISE SON

No other. And since Tech-9 passed, **I've** been the rightful leader of the Blood Syndicate.

### Page

Panel 1

On Wise Son, he's putting on Tech 9's hat on his head.

WISE SON

This is **Tech-9's** cap. And **I'm** wearing it, not you.

Panel 2

Favoring Wise Son, in Holocaust's face.

WISE SON

You thought the Blood Syndicate  
was a gang, and its members a  
bunch of gangsters. That ain't  
all there is to it, bro. That  
ain't **never** been all of it.  
We're **family**.

Panel 3

Icon and Rocket are visible behind Wise Son as Wise  
continues. Holocaust doesn't like this one bit.

WISE SON

A while back, Icon told me  
there would always be **justice**  
in the world, long as there  
were people willing to **fight**  
for it.

Panel 4

Close on Wise, he's calm, almost cocky.

WISE SON

As of today, the Blood  
Syndicate is ready to fight.  
What about **you**, Holly?

Panel 5

Holocaust whirls to see Fade, Boogieman and  
Flashback, standing defiantly against him.

HOLOCAUST

You're **all** in on this! You're  
all with him!

FADE

Oh, that's the **least** of it,  
*pendeja*.

**Page**

SPLASH

Wise Son flanked by DMZ, THIRD RAIL, AQUAMARIA,  
BRICKHOUSE, ORO, twelve year old NINA (Kwai) LAM,

holding her cat in her arms, and DOGG (in the foreground and panel left). They bad.

DOGG

Bow wow wow, yippie-yo,  
yippie-yay, **bitch!**

CAPTION

Dogg.

CAPTION

DMZ.

CAPTION

Third Rail.

CAPTION

Aquamaria.

CAPTION

Brickhouse.

CAPTION

Oro.

CAPTION

Kwai.

WISE SON

So here's what it be like,  
Holocaust. Turn yourself over  
to the supercop there.

WISE SON

Or face **BLOOD SYNDICATE**  
justice.

### Page

Panel 1

Holocaust smiles down chillingly on Wise Son.

HOLOCAUST

I don't have to fight **all** of  
you. All I have to do is beat  
**your** sorry ass. Make your move,  
punk.

WISE SON  
Ladies first.

Panel 2

Holocaust clocks Wise Son with a vicious, flaming fist.

HOLOCAUST  
I **challenge** your claim to leadership.

SFX  
THOK

Panel 3

On the crowd. Hardware stands impassively. Rocket is holding Icon's arm to keep him back.

ICON  
This has gone far enough!

HARDWARE  
Not quite. Let it play out.

ROCKET  
Listen to him. Wise has to **earn** their respect again.

### Page

Panel 1

Wise Son is holding his jaw and smiling.

WISE SON  
Challenge accepted, Holly. You and me, here and now, for the leadership of the Syndicate.

Panel 2

Holocaust smiles malevolently.

HOLOCAUST  
You just made your last mistake.

Panel 3

Wise Son is on his ass, almost grinning.

WISE SON

Nah. I'm going to make lots more mistakes. It's just that takin' your punk-ass on ain't one of em.

**Page**

Panel 1

Holocaust punches Wise with a FLAMING FIST, turning his head with the impact.

HOLOCAUST

You think you can talk ~~444~~ to me!

WISE SON

Uh!

Panel 2

Same thing, other fist. Wise's head is turned the opposite way.

WISE SON

Unnn! Good shots, Holly-

Panel 3

Close on Wise, smiling, unharmed.

WISE SON

-- But you can't beat me. You know what my power is. **Nothing** can hurt me.

HOLOCAUST

Nothing so **far**.

**Page**

Panel 1

Wise punches Holocaust, knocking him back.

WISE SON

I always had a thought about you, big man.

SFX

KRAK

Panel 2

Wise throws another right.

WISE SON

-- You're big as hell, and  
strong as a mother ~~444~~, but you  
got no **heart**.

Panel 3

And another.

WISE SON

Nobody ever **tries** you, people  
fold when you just look at them  
wrong.

SFX

KRAK

### Page

Panel 1

Wise lands another head shot.

WISE SON

But, I ain't going away. I'm  
standing up to your bull ~~444~~,  
just like Tech-9 did.

SFX

KRAK

Panel 2

Holocaust is shrugging off the punch.

WISE SON

And I think you're going down.

Panel 3

Holocaust and Wise Son grapple hand-to hand,  
Holocaust has the advantage and is pressing down.  
Wise is on one knee, trying to get back up on his  
feet. Holocaust is BURNING.

HOLOCAUST

**Burn**, Wise Son!

**Page**

Panel 1

Similar to previous, but the flames are hotter and spreading.

HOLOCAUST

Burn!

Panel 2

Similar to previous, but the flames are MUCH hotter. Both men are visible only as silhouettes.

HOLOCAUST

Burn!

Panel 3

Even hotter, it hurts to look at.

HOLOCAUST

Burrrrr—

**Page**

Panel 1

From above. Wise Son stands at the center of a charred circle on the floor. Holocaust's bones are white.

Panel 2

Wise Son is surprised.

WISE SON

Damn. I think I was starting to **feel** that.

Panel 3

The Blood Syndicate is following Wise Son, walking away. Dogg's tail wags vigorously.

WISE SON

C'mon, Bloods. Let's go home.

DOGG

Did you **see** that? He burned his own ass up! You are **great**, Wise son! **Great!**

DOGG

(small lettering)

Are we gonna eat soon?

**Page**

Panel 1

Outside the Factory, Harm, Static, Hardware, Icon and Rocket are gathered.

CAPTION

Later...

STATIC

Well, the ending was kinda creepy but all in all not a bad day's work.

Panel 2

Favoring sorrowful Icon.

ICON

The cost of our victory was too high.

HARM

Not from where I'm standing.

Panel 3

Favoring Harm.

HARM

They say if you don't have anything good to say about the dead, you should keep quiet. I say, "He's dead, **good.**"

Panel 4

Hardware has one hand on Icon's shoulder as he ticks off accomplishments with his other hand. Rocket is sitting on the curb, looking at Hardware.

HARDWARE

Look, Ike. We've dealt organized crime in Dakota a

crippling blow. Even the Blood  
Syndicate have come over to the  
side of the righteous.

Panel 5

Snarky Rocket asides to Hardware.

ROCKET

At least as much as the **next**  
guy.

HARDWARE

Touché.

**Page**

Panel 1

Favoring Rocket. Icon rubs his chin, considering.

ROCKET

He **is** right, though. We  
accomplished a **lot** together.

ICON

I must admit, I am impressed at  
how well we worked as a **team**.  
Perhaps it's time we formed a  
more **permanent** alliance.

Panel 2

On Harm, Hardware and an excited Static. Harm is  
waving the idea off.

STATIC

Oh, how cool is **this**? Can we  
have our Secret Headquarters on  
the **Moon**?

HARDWARE

You're **yanking** me, right?

HARM

Uh, I'm not really what you'd  
call a **team player**...

Panel 3

Icon has changed his mind.

ICON

No, you're right. Silly notion.  
I don't know what came over me.

Panel 4

Static is crushed. Panel right Rocket dominates the panel, she pats Static on the shoulder.

STATIC

Awww!

ROCKET

Cheer up, Static. It's like  
they say in that crappy old  
slave movie, "Tomorrow is  
another day."

ROCKET

You **never** know what the future  
might bring.

### Page

Panel 1

Shadowspire. Dharma is sitting, holding the Vision  
Globe of Rocket's Face, looking down at something  
off-globe.

DHARMA CAPTION

How succinct.

DHARMA CAPTION

Rocket's great destiny still  
lies ahead of her. I'd dared  
hope to be a small part of it.  
But she is not the one.

Panel 2

Closer on thoughtful Dharma.

DHARMA CAPTION

And so very few possibilities  
remain.

IRON BUTTERFLY

(Off-Panel)

Harry?

Panel 3

Dharma turns to see IRON BUTTERFLY. She is carrying a metal TRAY OF FOOD. There is a plate, a teapot and china cup on the tray. There are no Vision Globes here.

DHARMA

No, **Iron Butterfly**. I am  
**Dharma**, now.

IRON BUTTERFLY

Whatever you choose to call  
yourself, you still require  
food.

**Page**

Panel 1

Dharma, still sitting, takes the teapot and cup. The tray is "melting" away, it's *part* of Iron Butterfly's armor. She is holding the plate and smiling wryly.

IRON BUTTERFLY

You cannot expect to brood  
properly on an empty stomach.

Panel 2

Dharma scowls at Iron Butterfly.

DHARMA

Do not attempt to lighten my  
mood. The dark day I've spoken  
of is upon us.

DHARMA

My blind spot looms ever  
closer, obscuring more and more  
of my vision.

Panel 3

Favoring Iron Butterfly. She has placed a hand gently on Dharma's shoulder. Dharma rests the plate in his lap.

DHARMA

The future is no longer  
predetermined. I have reached a

fork in the path. And I cannot  
**choose**. I am paralyzed.

**Page**

Panel 1

Iron Butterfly tries to calm him down.

IRON BUTTERFLY

**Everyone** makes choices without  
knowing how they will turn out  
ahead of time.

Panel 2

Dharma leaps to his feet, propelling the tea pot, cup  
and plate towards Iron Butterfly. She doesn't flinch.  
Part of her armor warps into a SHIELD and the dishes  
break harmlessly against it.

SFX

(dishes shattering)

KSSSSH

DHARMA

(burst)

Not **me**!

Panel 3

DHARMA

Not for stakes like **these**.

IRON BUTTERFLY

Make your choice, Harry. If  
you're **wrong**, I **promise** I'll  
stop you.

**Page**

SPLASH

Foreground panel right Dharma has turned his back on  
background Iron Butterfly. He gazes down into a large  
Vision Globe, with an image of a PARAKEET IN FLIGHT  
against a sky-blue background inside of it.

DHARMA

No, Kahina. You **won't**.

DHARMA CAPTION

But, with the grace of whatever  
god will listen, perhaps one of  
the others will...

BOTTOM CAPTION

To be concluded...

**Page**

SPLASH

Dharma stands, brooding. The Vision Globe with a  
Parakeet in it is in his hands, he looks at it as if  
it were the holy grail.

DHARMA CAPTION

What's done is done. What **will**  
be done is done.

DHARMA CAPTION

Was. Is. Will be.

DHARMA CAPTION

For one who sees all of time,  
these are distinctions without  
a difference.

DHARMA CAPTION

Gifted with omniscience, I have  
been denied free will.

**Page**

Panel 1

Dharma is sitting in his chair again, brooding.

DHARMA CAPTION

And now I have nearly arrived  
at the single moment in all of  
history that escapes my vision.

DHARMA CAPTION

Lacking knowledge, my free will  
is restored.

Panel 2

Closer on Dharma.

DHARMA CAPTION

So shortly, it will be time for  
me the only decision I have  
ever been free to make.

Panel 3

Closer still.

DHARMA CAPTION

And, should I make the wrong  
choice, the world will end.

DHARMA CAPTION

It is for this reason that I  
hope **someone** will take the  
decision out of my hands and  
stop me before I choose.

Panel 4

Close on his hands, the Vision globe is there,  
showing a Parakeet flying against blue sky.

DHARMA CAPTION

Will it be him?

**Page**

Panel 1

The next two pages are the parakeet sequence from  
HARDWARE #1, pages 1 and 2. Swipe away. Eight  
year-old CURTIS METCALF is opening a bird cage,  
beginning to reach for the PARAKEET perched calmly  
inside.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Stop me if you've heard this  
one before but when I was a  
kid, I used to have this  
**parakeet.**

Panel 2

The bird flies past a surprised Curt's face.

HARDWARE CAPTION

And sometimes, when I'd open up  
his cage to clean it...

Panel 3

Curt reaches out to grab the fast-flying bird, but misses.

HARDWARE CAPTION

...He'd **escape**.

Panel 4

Curt chases as the bird loops around the room before heading towards the window.

HARDWARE CAPTION

The little bird would see the backyard and make his move.

Panel 5

The bird flies towards the camera, seemingly oblivious to the glass of the windowpane in front of him.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Invariably, he'd head straight for the window, fast as he could.

Panel 6

Reverse angle, longer. The bird rebounds off of the glass.

HARDWARE CAPTION

And inevitably, crack his head on the windowpane.

**Page**

Panel 1

The bird slams into the window again.

HARDWARE CAPTION

A barrier of **glass**, unseen and incomprehensible to him.

Panel 2

Closer as the bird slams into the window yet again.

HARDWARE CAPTION

So he'd try **again**, over and over...

Panel 3

Closer still as the bird hits the window again.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Until, spent and defeated, he  
**couldn't** try any longer.

Panel 4

Curt walks over to the window sill, where the bird  
lies.

HARDWARE CAPTION

My bird made a common error.

Panel 5

Curt, bird in his hands, heads back over to the cage.

HARDWARE CAPTION

He mistook being out of his  
cage...

Panel 6

Curt closes the cage on the defeated bird with a  
harsh CLANGG.

SFX

(cage door)

CLANGG

HARDWARE CAPTION

...For being **free**.

**Page**

SPLASH

Again, echoing the pose from HARDWARE #1, page 3.  
It's HARDWARE 4.0, in full Exo-armor (you get to make  
it up. Evoke the original armor but do your own  
thing. The Exo armor should wrap around the inner,  
black, form-fitting shell) is zooming up towards the  
reader, jetpacks blazing. He has never looked quite  
so cool. Leave room for too many captions, and for  
the title and credits at the bottom.

HARDWARE CAPTION

The bird died a long time ago,  
he never made it outside.

HARDWARE CAPTION

The boy grew into a man, who spent many years bumping his head against a similar barrier, a ceiling of glass, unseen and incomprehensible to him.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Unlike the bird, the man was capable of self-delusion. He believed, once **aware** of the glass, he could break **through** it.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Eight years later, he's learned the truth: **This** glass is still too **thick**.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Or maybe it's just me.

HARDWARE CAPTION

My name is **Curtis Metcalf**.

LOGO

HARDWARE

TITLE

"Escape"

**Page**

Panel 1

From behind Hardware, his path is blocked by a huge and futuristic military HELICOPTER.

HARDWARE CAPTION

I'm long since **tired** of this game.

TALKING COPTER

(radio burst)

**Hardware**, give it up! You can't win.

Panel 2

New angle is wider, there are two of the copters, one on either side of Hardware, dwarfing him.

TALKING COPTER

(radio burst)

You're **surrounded**. Give yourself up, turn over the armor and you won't be hurt. I'll give you to the count of three.

Panel 3

Close on Hardware's face.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Everybody always wants to **take my stuff**.

Panel 4

Close on Hardware pressing a button on his wrist gauntlet.

TALKING COPTER

(radio burst)

One...

HARDWARE CAPTION

Don't they realize that's why I started all this in the first place?

HARDWARE

You want Hardware?

Panel 5

Close on Hardware, firing a powerful wrist weapon at the camera.

TALKING COPTER

(radio burst)

Two...

HARDWARE

You **got** Hardware.

DOBIE CAPTION

Wrist Plaser: SELECTED

Panel 6

Wide, the beam arcs into the frame and cuts clean through the Helicopter's rotor assembly, severing the copters blades from its body.

DOBIE CAPTION

Wrist Plaser: DEPLOYED

SFX

ZZRAKK

HARDWARE

I think he was going to say,  
"three."

**Page**

Panel 1

Wide, the copter rolls one way, the still-spinning rotors go the other.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Damn.

Panel 2

Big panel. The blades fly into the other copter.

SFX

(crashing rotor)

SSHHHRAK

HARDWARE CAPTION

I just never learned how to  
make things easy for myself.

Panel 3

Hardware flies away from the camera into the rotor-damaged plane, smashing into the cockpit.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Not a lot of time, here.

Panel 4

Reverse. Hardware flies towards the camera, crashing out of the other side of the cockpit, towing the surprised PILOT with one hand.

SFX

CHOOOM

Panel 5

Similar to previous, both men are lit by the fireball of the EXPLODING Copter, receding behind them.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Hope there aren't any boats out on the water.

**Page**

Panel 1

Hardware DROPS the surprised Pilot and zooms away.

PILOT

NOOO!

HARDWARE

Hold that thought.

Panel 2

Long on the Rotor-less copter. An EJECTOR SEAT is bursting from the cockpit. The chute is open.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Huh. Looks like he's made his **own** arrangements for a ride.

Panel 3

Long on the Helicopter, in free-fall.

HARDWARE CAPTION

But that copter's falling **way** too close to the shore.

**Page**

Panel 4

On Hardware, holding both fists in front of him. They crackle with an eerie energy.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Can't let it hit the ground.

DOBIE CAPTION  
Sunburst Plasma Weapon:  
SELECTED

Panel 5

Wide. Hardware fires a GLOWING ENERGY BALL from his fists.

SFX  
FOOOM

DOBIE CAPTION  
Sunburst Plasma Weapon:  
DEPLOYED

Panel 6

The fireball hits the falling Helicopter, which glows with white light.

SFX  
rzzzzakk

DOBIE CAPTION  
Target: HIT

DOBIE CAPTION  
Target: DESTROYED

**Page**

Panel 1

On the Pilot. He's still falling.

PILOT  
(burst)  
Aaaaaaaaaah!

HARDWARE CAPTION  
Back in the day, this stuff was a lot easier. Just let 'em fall and scrape up whatever was left.

Panel 2

Similar to previous but the pilot is hanging in mid-air, held by the scruff of the neck by Hardware's hand, which comes in from the top of the panel.

PILOT

Aaaaah?

HARDWARE CAPTION

But I'm a changed man now, I guess.

Panel 3

Wide, reveal Hardware is holding the Pilot.

HARDWARE

I bet you thought I forgot about you.

Panel 4

The Pilot has pulled a pistol, he fires multiple shots into Hardware's face.

SFX

BLAMM BLAMM BLAMM BLAMM BLAMM  
BLAMM

Panel 5

Closer on the Pilot, still shooting his now empty gun at a completely unperturbed Hardware's face.

SFX

CLIK CLIK CLIK CLIK

HARDWARE

You're not a **smart** man but I'll say **this** for you—

Panel 6

Very wide to show how high up they are. They are specks, a thousand feet above the ground.

HARDWARE

—You got no shortage of balls.

**Page**

Panel 1

Exterior HARD COMPANY. Hardware is flying towards the roof.

HARDWARE CAPTION

First it was about **vengeance**,  
now it's about making payroll.

Panel 2

Interior Curtis' office. Hardware's outer shell is split open. Hardware walks forward, in his slim, form-fitting, black Hardware shell.

HARDWARE CAPTION

You get older, your situation  
changes, your motivations  
change.

Panel 3

Curt has pulled off his helmet, and is pulling off his mask.

HARDWARE CAPTION

And one day you wake up and  
realize you have no idea what  
it was that you've been  
struggling so hard to achieve.

Panel 4

Curtis sits at his desk. He looks very tired.

HARDWARE CAPTION

The original goals, all  
long-forgotten. Only the  
struggle remains.

OFF-PANEL SPEAKER

Curtis?—

Panel 5

Wide to reveal AUGUSTUS (Icon) FREEMAN, in one of his better suits, carrying a thick MANILA ENVELOPE. Curtis sees him.

AUGUSTUS

—Is this a bad time?

HARDWARE CAPTION

**Augustus Freeman.** He's my lawyer, among other things.

**Page**

Panel 1

Favoring Curtis.

CURTIS

I'd ask you how you got in past all the security, but I suppose that'd be a waste of time. What'd you bring me?

Panel 2

Augustus puts the envelope down on Curtis' desk.

AUGUSTUS

The keys to the kingdom. You've **won.**

Panel 3

Big panel. Leave room for captions. Curt sits at his desk, reading through the papers, Augustus is over his shoulder, explaining things.

HARDWARE CAPTION

The short version. **Edwin Alva,** a man I could never decide whether he was friend or foe, died a few years ago.

HARDWARE CAPTION

In his will, he left me a multibillion dollar company.

HARDWARE CPTION

I guess that counts as one for the "friend" column.

Panel 4

Curt is staring at the papers in disbelief.

HARDWARE CAPTION

So. Now, Probate's over and the various lawsuits are all bought off, or settled in my favor.

CURTIS

I'm a **very** rich man...

Panel 5

Favoring Augustus, he's almost smiling.

AUGUSTUS

Have you considered the **possibilities**?

CURTIS

What do you mean?

AUGUSTUS

There's so much more **good** you can do, now.

Panel 6

On Curtis, his expression unreadable.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Yeah. That's **one** way I could go with it...

**Page**

Panel 1

Exterior, THE MASON BUILDING -night.

HARDWARE CAPTION

The Mason Building.

HARDWARE CAPTION

World Headquarters of Alva Technologies.

Panel 2

Curtis, master of all he surveys, stands in front of the huge picture window in an obscenely large office. Note the PARAKEET on an un-caged perch somewhere in the room.

HARDWARE CAPTION

My office.

Panel 3

On Curtis' face, illuminated by the city lights.

HARDWARE CAPTION

It's taken me over a year, but  
I've finally remade this  
company to my tastes.

Panel 4

Wide. Curtis crosses the room, heading for an exit.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Only three more things to  
attend to. Then I'm finished.

Panel 5

On Curtis, opening large wooden double doors to a  
room we can't see inside.

HARDWARE CAPTION

This was the old man's office.  
Alva's. I haven't changed a  
thing since the day he died.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Not that I'm sentimental. Trust  
me.

Panel 6

BIG PANEL. Curtis has just entered a HUGE office,  
dominated by an ENORMOUS painting of Edwin Alva. This  
is the one we've seen many times in the early issues  
of the series. The angle exaggerates the size of the  
painting. Curtis is a small figure, absolutely  
dominated by the great man.

HARDWARE CAPTION

I just could never figure out  
where to put the **painting**.

**Page**

Panel 1

On Curtis' face, we're looking up past him. Alva's face fills the entire background.

HARDWARE CAPTION

I **hate** this room. Edwin Alva,  
as always, looming over  
everything.

Panel 2

Wide, Curt is a speck beneath the huge picture.

HARDWARE CAPTION

A pathetically obvious metaphor  
for my whole life.

Panel 3

Close on Curt, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Not that, for all its  
puerility, it's any less  
accurate.

HARDWARE CAPTION

I've **always** been defined in  
terms of Alva.

Panel 4

Flashback Panel. Young Curt is winning the science fair as in Hardware #1. Alva looks on approvingly.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Alva's **discovery**.

Panel 5

Flashback Panel. Young Curt is building an incredibly complex ROBOT.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Alva's **prodigy**.

Panel 6

Flashback Panel. Alva looks on as Young Curtis, wearing a prep school blazer, stands outside the door to a classroom.

HARDWARE CAPTION  
Alva's charity case.

**Page**

Panel 1

Adult Curtis, he just got his job. He's wearing a lab coat and Alva is shaking his hand.

HARDWARE CAPTION  
Alva's **employee**.

Panel 2

Flashback Panel. HARDWARE 1.0 (original armor) is about to punch Alva in the face.

HARDWARE CAPTION  
Alva's **enemy**.

Panel 3

Flashback Panel. Curtis is standing in the rain over Alva's grave.

HARDWARE CAPTION  
Alva's **heir**.

Panel 4

Back to the present, Curt is still standing in the room.

HARDWARE CAPTION  
Even his death didn't free me.

HARDWARE CAPTION  
Computer? Respond.

Panel 5

Wide to reveal the smiling holographic image of the ALVA AI appearing in the room.

ALVA  
You **sum**moned me, Curtis? What an un**ex**pected surprise.

HARDWARE CAPTION  
This, I suppose, requires some explanation. I didn't bring him back to life, exactly.

Panel 6

Curtis heads out of the room, Alva follows.

CURTIS

Come with me, Alva.

HARDWARE CAPTION

My digital playmate here is just a **hologram**, projected by a self-programming, learning system designed to behave as the real Alva would.

**Page**

Panel 1

Close as Curt electronically locks the door.

SFX

BRRRTKLAK

ALVA

Entertainment, do you require?

HARDWARE CAPTION

It ought to be some consolation that I am the only man on Earth smart enough to create something **quite** this irritating.

Panel 2

Wide. Curt is walking into his own office. Alva looks at the locked door in mild dismay.

ALVA

I've been dabbling in the composition of original **limericks**.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Like I said, it **ought** to be.

Panel 3

In Curtis' office. He is seated behind his desk. Alva is standing in front of it, one finger raised as he regales Curt with his creation.

ALVA

There **once** lived a bassist  
named **Mingus**, with a  
preternatural gift for  
cunni..."

Panel 4

Curtis stands, cutting him off.

CURTIS

**Enough**, Alva.

HARDWARE CAPTION

The Alva AI believes that its  
purpose is to help me come to  
terms with my ... personal  
issues. Sort of a cyber-shrink.

Panel 5

Curtis walks past Alva to the PARAKEET'S PERCH.

CURTIS

This is going to be our last  
session, Alva.

ALVA

Really? How **fascinating**. And  
pray tell, **why**?

### Page

Panel 1

On Curt, the bird is now perched on his index finger.

CURTIS

Because I finally understand my  
problem. I'll demonstrate.

Panel 2

On Curt's face yelling at the bird that was just on  
his finger. The bird has just hopped backwards and  
off, fluttering its wings frantically.

CURTIS

(burst)

Shoo!

Panel 3

Wide as Curt waves his arms at the bird. Speedlines show the bird looping in circles around him.

CURTIS

Get **out** of here. I'm letting you go! **Get!**

Panel 4

The bird flutters to the foreground perch. A calm background Curt watches. A thoughtful Alva is beside him.

CURTIS

See?

Panel 5

Curt has turned to face a large BOOKCASE. His back is to us.

CURTIS

When the cage is all you've ever known, it doesn't matter if the bars are still sturdy. It doesn't even matter if the bars are still **there**.

**Page**

Panel 1

Similar to previous. The bookcase splits open down the middle, sliding back to reveal the HARDWARE armor.

CURTIS

When I escaped the cage that circumstance had made for me, I built myself **another**.

Panel 2

Curtis has turned his back on the Armor, it's behind him, looming.

CURTIS

Instead of living my life, I've been playing with toys.

CURTIS

It's time to put them away.  
It's time I grew up.

Panel 3

Curt speaks to a bemused Alva.

CURTIS

That's it, Alva. I don't need  
you anymore.

ALVA

No. No you **don't**.

ALVA

End program.

Panel 4

Favoring Alva, who is fading away, much more  
transparent, as is the lettering in his balloon.

ALVA

Fare thee well, friend Curtis.  
It occurs to me that, while I  
did not fully **appreciate** you  
while you were here, I **shall**  
miss you.

ALVA

(text fading)

I'd quite fallen in love with  
the **dark** side of your **nature**.

**Page**

Panel 1

Exterior HARD CO. Night.

HARDWARE CAPTION

One down, two to go. But this  
is the easy one.

Panel 2

Curt sits at the head of a boardroom table. Seated  
around him are DEACON, ANN KIM, EDDIE ALVA JR. and  
Augustus Freeman.

CURTIS

I'm glad you could all make it.  
I know I haven't had a lot of  
time for you since I took over  
Alva Technologies but that's  
because I've been busy.

Panel 3

Favoring Curt, continuing.

CURTIS

I've been restructuring Alva  
Tech. Now it's narrowly focused  
on scientific Research and  
Development, and has been  
shrunk to a manageable size.

Panel 4

On Ann, Deacon, and Eddie Alva Jr., jaws agape in  
shock.

CURTIS

My attorney will handle the  
details but the crux of the  
matter is this: From now on,  
Alva Industries belongs to you  
three. I quit.

Panel 5

Ann sputters, Alva, Jr. and Deacon are equally  
agitated.

ANN

But you can't...

ALVA JR.

Curtis...!

DEACON

Curt, what about **Hardware**?

Panel 6

Favoring Curt, hands folded in front of him on the  
desk, completely serene.

CURTIS

Hardware is history, people. I enjoyed the ride. I hope you did too. In **any** case...

**Page**

Panel 1

Exterior a nice little brownstone in GEORGETOWN.

HARDWARE CAPTION

...Hardware is History.

BOTTOM CAPTION

Washington, DC...

Panel 2

Curtis is at the front door of an apartment, bearing flowers. He's pushing the bell.

HARDWARE CAPTION

Two down, one to go. As usual, I left the hard stuff for last.

SFX

BZZZZZT

CURT

Barraki, open up! It's **me**!

Panel 3

Favoring BARRAKI, who has just opened the door to see Curt. Her hair is long again, it's been a couple of years. She is very surprised, and very beautiful.

BARRAKI

Curtis? What...what are you **doing** here?

Panel 4

Favoring Curtis, Barraki looks up at him in amazement.

CURTIS

I quit being Hardware, and I sold my company. You want to get married?

Panel 5

Her arms are around him. She's kissing him hard.

BARRAKI

**Hell** yes.

**Page**

Panel 1

Time cut. Curt and Barraki are outdoors, walking arm in arm past a fountain.

CURTIS

...So the good news is, after selling off the junk, I managed to put a nice piece of change in my pocket.

BARRAKI

Knowing your gift for understatement, I'd guess that means you're a millionaire now.

Panel 2

Closer, Favoring a smug Curt.

CURTIS

**B**illionaire, actually. And that should be, **we're** billionaires. Plenty of money to fund my next project.

BARRAKI

**N**ext project?

Panel 3

New angle, Curt lost in thought.

CURTIS

Hardware was born of bitterness and anger. I did some good with it but that good always felt **tainted**, half-assed, even.

Panel 4

Medium shot, Curt has turned and put his arms around Barraki's waist. The fountain blooms behind them.

CURTIS

Now I want to create something entirely new, without all the baggage. Something with no restraints except the limits of my own vision.

Panel 5

Favoring a concerned Barraki,

BARRAKI

That sounds wonderful, but you've always said Hardware was necessary. Not that I'm **volunteering** you for the job again...

Panel 6

Smiling Curt kisses Barraki on the cheek.

CURTIS

Don't worry. I took care of it.

**Page**

Panel 1

Exterior Mason Building, night.

HARDWARE BALLOON

(from inside building)

Excuse me, Mr. Stuart?—

Panel 2

In a very nice office, Deacon looks up from his desk in surprise at the off-panel speaker.

HARDWARE BALLOON

—I'm ready to report for work.

Panel 3

Big panel. Hardware 4.0 is standing there, powerful and gleaming in the full exo-skeleton.

DEACON

(burst)

Hardware!

Panel 4

The armor has split open down the middle. Stepping from it is a beautiful WOMAN, clad in the skintight, black Hardware shell.

HARDWARE BALLOON

Do I **look** like Hardware?

Panel 5

Medium. The beautiful, powerful-looking female Hardware shakes a smiling Deacon's hand.

HARDWARE BALLOON

Mr. Metcalf informed me that you folks might need some help around here.

HARDWARE BALLOON

My name's Tiffany Evans, but you can call me **Technique**.

**Page**

Panel 1

Exterior a large colonial split level.

CAPTION

Virginia, three weeks later.

TALKING HOUSE

Curtis, this is **beautiful**.

Panel 2

Interior the huge, already furnished living room, Curtis, in tux, is obviously carrying the wedding dress-clad Barraki across the threshold.

BARRAKI

But I still don't see why you were in such a big rush to **move**. What's your problem with DC?

CURTIS

Don't get me started. This is supposed to be a **compromise**...

Panel 3

Curt deposits Barraki on the couch.

BARRAKI

Hey! Where're you **going**?

CURTIS

I've got one last little chore  
to do.

Panel 4

Curt is carrying a bird cage with a parakeet in it  
over towards an open window.

CURTIS

I'm not what I **want** to be. I'm  
not what I **should** be. I'm not  
even what I'm **going** to be. But  
thank God I'm not what I **was**...

### Page

Panel 1

He is lifting the cage top off.

CURTIS

Okay, buddy, this is it.

Panel 2

Curtis smiles as the bird flies straight for the  
window.

CURTIS

(burst)

Fly!

Panel 3

Big panel. Looking up at the Parakeet, in full  
flight, against a very blue sky.

TYPESET CAPTION

"Sometimes I suspect that we  
build our traps ourselves, then  
we back into them, pretending  
amazement the while."

—Neil Gaiman

**Page**

Panel 1

A distraught Dharma is gazing into a Vision Globe of a Parakeet flying against a sky-blue background. A concerned Iron Butterfly is in the background, watching him.

DHARMA

No. Not **him**, either.

Panel 2

Iron Butterfly takes Dharma's face in her palms. She looks him in the eyes.

IRON BUTTERFLY

You can make this decision  
**without** knowing the outcome.  
Just do what you think is  
right.

Panel 3

Favoring Dharma.

IRON BUTTERFLY

Don't be afraid, Harry. There  
are a lot of people here who  
love you. We'll back you up.

DHARMA

No one loves me but **you**. And I  
an undeserving even of that.

Panel 1

Favoring Dharma.

DHARMA

If you truly understood what I  
dare to contemplate, your love  
would not survive.

DHARMA

Still, you deserve to see the  
truth for yourself.

Panel 2

Wide. Dharma stands away from Iron Butterfly, his  
head is back, he's speaking to the room.

DHARMA  
Mechanic?—

Panel 3

INTERIOR MECHANIC'S CONTROL ROOM. Mechanic is at his post, smoking a cigar and listening to Dharma's instruction.

TAILLESS RADIO BALLOON  
—This is Dharma. Prepare to  
**shadowslide**, you know the  
coordinates.

MECHANIC  
Boss, you ain't going back  
**there** again, are you?

TAILLESS RADIO BALLOON  
I am indeed. And I'm taking  
Iron Butterfly with me.

Panel 4

Dharma and Iron Butterfly are fading away in the distinct signature of the shadowslide.

TAILLESS RADIO BALLOON  
Slide in progress. Be **careful**  
in there.

SFX  
(shadowslide)  
WHZZSNZZ

**Page**

Panel 1

Iron Butterfly and Dharma SLIDE into a VOID. The background is an eerie swirl of blues and indigos. Later it will be revealed that this background is a detail of the character RIFT.

SFX  
(shadowslide)  
WHZZSNZZ

IRON BUTTERFLY  
Where are we?

DHARMA  
(whisper balloon)  
Speak **softly**. There are forces  
here I am not yet ready to  
disturb.

Panel 2  
Favoring Dharma.

DHARMA  
(whisper balloon)  
We are **inside** of shadowslide,  
the extradimensional realm we  
use for teleportation.

Panel 3  
Closer on Dharma.

DHARMA  
(whisper balloon)  
I recently discovered, at the  
outer reaches of this  
dimension, a source of  
extraordinary energy.

**Page**

Panel 1  
Wide. Iron Butterfly spreads her wings, she has  
Dharma under the armpits and is towing him "up" into  
the air. The blues and indigos now make up the  
"floor," stretching to the horizon. The "sky" is pure  
black.

DHARMA  
(whisper balloon)  
Lift me into the air. It's  
difficult to see from here.

Panel 2  
Dharma and Iron Butterfly are flying up and away from  
camera.

DHARMA

(whisper balloon)

What I have found resides  
between the borders of our  
reality and ... **elsewhere.**

DHARMA

Hidden here in the **shadows**  
beneath the **bleed.**

Panel 3

Close on Dharma and Iron Butterfly, looking down at  
something off-panel and far below.

DHARMA

(whisper balloon)

Properly utilized, it erases  
the barriers between thought,  
matter, and energy. It is a  
pool of pure creative force.

IRON BUTTERFLY

Oh, dear God...

### Page

SPLASH

Big Panel, high in the foreground, Dharma and Iron  
Butterfly are specks. Down below, gigantic and  
sleeping in a fetal position in a pool of blackness,  
is RIFT.

DHARMA

(whisper balloon)

Yes. A **sleeping** God, who will  
awaken to do my bidding, should  
I dare to ask.

DHARMA

(whisper balloon)

Neither Alpha nor Omega, but  
all that lies between. He is  
**Rift.**

### Page

Panel 1

On Iron Butterfly and Dharma, they begin to FADE AWAY in the distinct signature of the shadowslide.

DHARMA  
(whisper balloon)  
Mechanic. Return us home.

SFX  
(shadowslide)  
WHZZSNZZ

Panel 2

Iron Butterfly and Dharma FADE IN to Dharma's chamber.

SFX  
(shadowslide)  
WHZZSNZZ

DHARMA  
And now you understand. I have at my disposal a source of power sufficient to prevent the coming disaster.

Panel 3

Dharma is on the ground again. Iron Butterfly stands nearby.

IRON BUTTERFLY  
Or perhaps, to **cause** it.

DHARMA  
That is, of course, the other possibility.

Panel 4

Looking past foreground Iron Butterfly's hip. Her gauntlet flows, it's transforming into something (a knife). Background Dharma is surrounded by Vision Globes, he's reaching for one.

DHARMA  
The temptation is great. Even if my choice to harness the Rift power **is** what causes the *Dhosh*, that very same power

should allow me to make things  
right again.

**Page**

Panel 1

Iron Butterfly, is forming some metal into the shape  
of a HUGE KNIFE.

IRON BUTTERFLY

Do you truly believe that kind  
of power **can** be controlled?

Panel 2

New angle from behind Iron Butterfly, she hides the  
HUGE KNIFE BEHIND HER BACK. Dharma is oblivious, he  
has his back to her, looking at one of the Vision  
Globes.

DHARMA

An excellent question. There is  
still a chance I need never  
test the theory.

Panel 3

Close on Dharma, peering into a large Vision Globe.  
Inside the globe is an image of STATIC'S FACE.

DHARMA

Although he has reached but a  
fraction of his potential, he  
is the most powerful being on  
Earth.

DHARMA

Surely if I am to be stopped,  
it would be by him.

Panel 4

Close on the Globe with STATIC visible in it.

DHARMA CAPTION

My heart rises in my chest, as  
images of my final hope unfold  
before me...

**Page**

SPLASH

Exterior HEMINGWAY HIGH, Night. In the extreme foreground is one of those display signs you see in front of High Schools, it says "Hemingway High School" in permanent letters above a white field. Spelled out on the sign, in those movable letters (like on a theatre marquee) is "WELCOMES THE CLASS OF 201(conveniently blocked by a handy foreground branck)". Also in the foreground, looking at the sign and lit by the light from it, is VIRGIL HAWKINS. His back is to us. He's twenty-seven years old, taller and a bit broader. He's wearing a black TUXEDO.

VIRGIL CAPTION

They say time flies when you're  
having fun. Seems to me it  
moves along pretty quick  
**whatever** you're doing.

LOGO

STATIC SHOCK

TITLE

"What Ever Happened To All The  
Fun In The World?"

**Page**

Panel 1

New angle reveals VIRGIL'S FACE. He's older and wears a somewhat cheesy moustache and goatee. His hair is substantially longer, but still in braids. Still in all, he turned out to be quite a handsome young man. He's reading the sign wistfully.

VIRGIL CAPTION

Case in point; all of a sudden  
it was ten years later...

OFF-PANEL SPEAKER

Virgil!-

Panel 2

Virgil turns to see a smiling RICK MASON, similarly aged. Rick dresses like a well-to-do Hollywood hotshot. His hair is still too long but in a ponytail.

RICK  
-Virgil Hawkins!

VIRGIL  
**Richie?** What's it been, five  
years?

RICK  
At least.

Panel 3

They hug, smiling and clapping each other's backs.

VIRGIL  
So, what are you **doing** now? You  
still work for the ad agency?

RICK  
Nope. Moved to LA. I'm  
directing 3-V commercials.

VIRGIL  
Damn, you're cool.

Panel 4

They've broken the hug. Virgil looks troubled. Rick  
is uncomfortable, like he put his foot in his mouth.

RICK  
Always was. Hey, I heard about  
Frieda. Sorry man. I really am.

VIRGIL  
Um, I don't really feel up to  
talking about that...

RICK

...

Panel 1

A too-cheerful Virgil indicates the open front doors.

VIRGIL  
(letter quote marks)  
"Breaking the uncomfortable  
silence, the caped crusader  
points to the open portal and

barks a terse command to his partner:"

VIRGIL

(burst)

"To the **gymnasium**, boy wonder!"

Panel 2

Favoring Rick.

RICK

How many times do I have to **tell** you? **I'm** Batman, **you're** Robin.

VIRGIL

Nuh uh. **I'm** Batman.

Panel 3

From behind Virgil and Rick as they enter the big front double doors.

RICK

Fine, I'm **Galactus**.

VIRGIL

Then I'm **Darkseid**.

Panel 4

Favoring Virgil.

RICK

**Be** Darkseid. Galactus would **eat** Darkseid.

VIRGIL

**There's** an ugly image.

Panel 5

Rick Shrugs.

RICK

**Could** be worse. **Could** be vice versa.

### Page

Panel 1

Inside the Gym. Rick is still talking. Favoring Virgil, reacting to the sight of the room.

VIRGIL CAPTION

I hadn't set foot in this place  
since graduation.

Panel 2

Our first good look at the GYM, all decked out for  
the party. It's full of people, dancing, grouped in  
clusters and talking, *et cetera*. There is a big  
banner, dominating the room, WELCOME CLASS OF 201  
(whoops, it's obscured or cut off again) -10TH  
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

VIRGIL CAPTION

The sights and sounds of high  
school came back to me in a  
Proustean rush.

VIRGIL CAPTION

Okay, that came off a **little** on  
the pretentious side but  
sometimes there just aren't any  
appropriate Star Wars  
references at hand.

Panel 3

Virgil and Rick work the party. They greet FELIX and  
a woman who must be his WIFE.

VIRGIL CAPTION

I caught up with my friends  
while old memories replayed in  
my mind.

Panel 4

DAISY and some women you can make up are hugging and  
greeting the guys.

VIRGIL CAPTION

The weakness in my knees as I  
walk in here the first time, a  
lowly freshman.

VIRGIL CAPTION

The squeak of my locker door as  
it opens, the clang as it slams  
shut.

Panel 5

CHUCK just told a joke, Virgil is doubled over laughing, the others laugh too.

VIRGIL CAPTION

The dampness on the bottom of the lunchroom tray that I **hope** is just condensation.

Panel 6

Virgil sitting on a folding chair near a punch bowl. He's ignoring the party around him, absorbed in the YEARBOOK he's reading, a wistful smile on his face.

VIRGIL CAPTION

That lovely girl I fell for and her wonderful smell; chamomile tea with a hint of copper, like the taste of the edge of a spoon.

VIRGIL CAPTION

I suppose my high school memories are pretty **typical**.—

**Page**

SPLASH

Virgil's head in the upper left hand corner, dissolving into a FLASHBACK PANEL of a STATIC figure, lifted from STATIC #1, page 2. He hovers in mid air on a garbage can lid, electrical energy crackling around him. Behind him, (black lines knocked back to gray and all colored in pastels), a MONTAGE of his friends and foes: DUSK, LARRY WADE, PUFF and COIL, DONNER and BLITZEN, TARMACK, HOT STREAK, D-STRUCT, A GLOWING CHIHUAHUA, RUBBERBAND MAN, THE GARDNER, *et cetera*.

VIRGIL CAPTION

—All things considered.

VIRGIL CAPTION

You see, I wasn't just Virgil Hawkins, teen-aged fanboy and owner of the fastest mouth yet produced by human evolution.

VIRGIL CAPTION

I was also a bona-fied **super hero: Static**, master of electricity, protector of the weak, booty-kicker of villainy.

VIRGIL CAPTION

You know, the **good guy**.

VIRGIL CAPTION

But I gave all that up a **long time** ago. I don't suppose many people these days remember there even **was** a Static.

**Page**

Panel 1

Big panel, the front door EXPLODES, revealing FIREWHEEL. This is Hotstreak, older and redesigned. The central image of his new costume is his flaming swastika. He should also be wearing modified shorts with suspenders over his body suit. Partygoers dive for cover.

VIRGIL CAPTION

Of course, I've been wrong before...

SFX

KA-CHOOM

FIREWHEEL

All right, which one of you ~~44~~ers is **Static**!?!

Panel 2

Firewheel is holding a FLAMING SWASTIKA in his fist.

FIREWHEEL

C'mon **out**, Static. Prepare to **die** at the hands of **Firewheel**! You hear me? I'mo **kill** you!

Panel 3

On Virgil and Rick. Virgil is literally rolling his eyes. A thought balloon leading to Virgil has a

PICTURE of a BASEBALL with a giant SCREW through the middle of it.

VIRGIL CAPTION

"Firewheel." Back in high school, the little Nazi used to call himself Hotstreak.

Panel 4

Virgil is slipping out of the panel. Rick has cupped his hands around his mouth and is yelling.

VIRGIL

(whisper)

Cover for me will you, Rick? I might still have some work clothes stashed around somewhere.

RICK

Hey! How do you even know Static is **here**?

Panel 5

Rick and others scatter as a FLAMING SWASTIKA rips into the floor.

FIREWHEEL

I always figgered he was in this graduating class.

SFX

FOOOSH

Panel 6

Favoring Firewheel.

FIREWHEEL

For your sake pervert, you best hope I'm right!

RICK

Oh sure, **you're** wearing *Lederhosen* to a formal function and **I'm** the pervert.

Page

Panel 1

Virgil is at a LOCKER, sending an electrical jolt through the lock that SHATTERS it.

VIRGIL CAPTION

With any luck, nobody ever found my **hiding place**...

SFX

ZZRAK

VIRGIL CAPTION

I've managed to keep my identity a secret this long. No need to blow it for skippy the skinhead.

Panel 2

Virgil has opened the locker and scattered its contents, he's peeling back a false rear wall, and pulling out his COSTUME (this is the one from season 3 and 4 of the TV show).

VIRGIL CAPTION

Over ten years and it's **still here!** When they give out the Nobel prize for **costume hiding**...

VIRGIL CAPTION

Well, I guess it should go to the Flash. Still, this is pretty **respectable**.

Panel 3

Big panel, entire second tier. Back in the gymnasium. Flames are everywhere. Flaming swastikas cut through the air. People are running, Firewheel is at the center of it all.

FIREWHEEL

So I spend **years** rotting away in prison, while niggers and Jews and faggots be roaming the streets, free as they please.

OFF-PANEL STATIC  
(static balloon)  
Yadda, yadda, yadda. **Cats** and  
dogs, **living** together!

Panel 4

STATIC, surfing on a trash can lid, zooms in towards  
Firewheel.

FIREWHEEL  
(burst)  
Static!

STATIC  
Sorry I'm late, but you have no  
**idea** how hard it is to find a  
metal **trash can lid** these days.

Panel 5

Static dodges a spread of flaming swastikas from  
FIREWHEEL.

STATIC  
So what's the beef **this** time?  
Affirmative Action keep you  
from getting that big KKK  
promotion you were expecting?

FIREWHEEL  
Don't be mocking me, Static.  
Everything bad that ever  
happened to me was because of  
your kind.

**Page**

Panel 1

Static projects a FORCE FIELD that protects a couple  
of people from the flaming debris falling from the  
ceiling.

STATIC  
"Don't be mocking"? That's **it**,  
no more Quentin Tarantino  
movies for **you**. C'mon buddy,  
**conjugate** with me! "I **am**, you  
**are**, he, she and it **is**"--

Panel 2

Tight on Firewheel.

FIREWHEEL

Damn it Static! My life ain't  
no joke! The **whole world** is set  
up to hold back the white man.  
It's time you had to **pay**!

Panel 3

Wide, Static is firing a series of electrical bursts,  
easily picking Firewheel's flaming Swastikas out of  
the air.

STATIC

I'd rather sit through an  
odd-numbered Star Trek film  
festival than argue racial  
politics with **you**, but has it  
ever occurred to you that  
you're so miserable because...

STATIC

Well, because you're so  
**miserable**?

Panel 4

Static is flying behind Firewheel, who is running  
away at super-speed, leaving a trail of fire behind  
him.

FIREWHEEL

(burst)

I'mo **kill** you! I'mo kill you  
**all**!

STATIC

See, you're making my point for  
me. What kind of plan is **that**?  
Tell the truth, did you  
accidentally dislodge your  
brain cell?

Panel 5

Firewheel blasts the wall in front of him with a huge  
burst of flame, he's making a big hole in the wall.

SFX

KA-THOOM

FIREWHEEL

This ain't over, Static!

STATIC

Maybe not, but it **should** be.  
It's **tired** and bound to  
collapse from its own weight.

STATIC

Speaking of which, that wall  
doesn't look so good.

Panel 6

Static is projecting ELECTRICAL ENERGY to hold up the wall. A trail of flame leads out of the hole, and out to the horizon. Static yells back to folks at the party.

STATIC

Okay everybody, let's clear out  
of here. I can only hold this  
thing together for another few  
minutes...

**Page**

Panel 1

Night. Virgil (back in his tux), Rick, Chuck and Felix walk down the street.

VIRGIL CAPTION

Later, my friends and I went  
for a walk...

CHUCK

...and Hotstreak-

VIRGIL

Firewheel.

CHUCK

Who**ever**. He got away clean,  
huh? Getting kinda **slow** in your  
old age?

Panel 2

Favoring Virgil and Rick.

VIRGIL

Maybe. But at least no one was seriously hurt.

RICK

**This** time.

VIRGIL

Look, I'm betting he'll go for a rematch at the homecoming game tomorrow. If he does, I'll nail him then for **sure**.

Panel 3

Favoring Felix.

FELIX

What if he doesn't? You going to hang around for a while?

VIRGIL

I can't, I'm just a lowly resident. Even getting these **two** days off was a minor miracle.

Panel 4

Wide, and from far enough back that we can see some of the street.

VIRGIL

If I have to leave before I catch Firewheel, I'll ask **Icon** to handle it for me. She still owes me a favor or two.

VIRGIL

Hey, Felix! Where are we **going**, anyway? Maybe I should fly back and bring the car around.

FELIX

No need, buddy.—

Panel 5

Exterior FANDOM'S LAIR. It's a comic book store. Felix has his keys out and is unlocking the front door. Virgil looks up at the sign.

FELIX

—We're already here!

VIRGIL

Wow! **Fandom's Lair**! We spent a lot of hours in **here**, back in the day.

FELIX

Not as many as I do **now**. I **bought** the place.

Panel 6

Inside the store. There are no comic books, just racks of flat Cardboard sleeves with comic book pictures on them, but they're blister packs for little USB drives . Foreground Virgil is peering at one ("The Complete Little Lulu"), he's opened the sleeve and is looking at the USB drive inside. Chuck looks on disapprovingly.

CHUCK

Don't **open** it! It loses all the value!

VIRGIL

Who cares? It's just a data drive.

CHUCK

The **packages** are collectable.

**Page**

Panel 1

Felix has taken the comic away from Virgil, and is putting it in a plastic bag.

VIRGIL

I didn't even know they still **made** comic books

FELIX

I've even got some of the old  
**paper** ones, in the back.

VIRGIL

So, what **new** stuff should I be  
reading?

Panel 2

Felix is over Virgil's shoulder as he studies a  
different comic.

FELIX

This is Chaykin's new **Supergirl**  
revamp. In issue 3 she crushes  
a piece of coal into a diamond.

VIRGIL

So?

FELIX

No hands.

Panel 3

Virgil is handing the case to Felix. Chuck is holding  
some very slick Tablet PC's Rick is dragging out a  
card table.

VIRGIL

Wrap that up for me, will you?

CHUCK

Hey! Who's up for a little  
Warcraft?

RICK

Okay, but just for an hour or  
so. We've all got a busy day  
tomorrow.

Panel 4

Exterior VIRGIL'S HOUSE, DAWN.

VIRGIL CAPTION

So, six hours later...

TALKING HOUSE

Well, look who's creeping in  
with the dawn—

Panel 5

Interior, the Hawkins' LIVING ROOM. MOM, dressed for work, is kissing Virgil, who is still in his tux although he lost the jacket and tie hours ago.

MOM

—If it isn't my son the doctor!  
Out carousing all night?

VIRGIL

In my way.

Panel 6

Virgil heads up the stairs. Mom is at the foot of the stairs, putting on her coat.

MOM

You've got just enough time for  
a quick shower. Your sister's  
making breakfast.

VIRGIL

Not to worry. If the Maalox  
doesn't work, I can always  
write myself a prescription for  
something stronger.

MOM

See you, baby.

**Page**

Panel 1

The KITCHEN. Virgil's sister SHARON is frying something in a black skillet, she's obviously pregnant. Virgil is looking over her shoulder. He's wearing a U of M baseball cap and he's dressed in jeans and a college letter jacket (again, The University of Michigan).

VIRGIL CAPTION

And, after a quick shower...

VIRGIL  
Morning, Sharon. What're you  
making, Spaghetti?

SHARON  
Pancakes.

VIRGIL  
That would have been like, my  
third or fourth guess. Honest.

Panel 3

Sharon has turned around to face Virgil. She wields  
her spatula like a weapon. Both are making sour faces  
at each other.

SHARON  
Dufus.

VIRGIL  
Liver lips.

SHARON  
Poindexter.

VIRGIL  
Microcephalic.

Panel 4

Sharon is smiling and putting food into a plate.  
Virgil's smiling too.

SHARON  
You want bacon?

VIRGIL  
Thanks. Want me to go wake  
Steven?

SHARON  
He's working a double. You know  
we're trying to save for a  
house.

Panel 5

Both are at the breakfast table. Virgil's pouring  
syrup. Both are wistful.

VIRGIL

This is really something huh?  
You're married and about to  
have a baby, I'm practically a  
doctor.

SHARON

Why is it I miss Dad the most  
at the happiest times? What's  
Mom always saying?...

VIRGIL

"Robert should be here for  
this."

Panel 6

Favoring Sharon. Virgil is standing, putting down an  
empty juice glass.

SHARON

Well, he **should**. So should  
Frieda.

VIRGIL

Yeah, well. Things don't always  
work out the way we hoped, do  
they?

VIRGIL

I gotta go, Sharon.

### Page

Panel 1

Exterior the FOOTBALL FIELD. It's a good-sized  
high-school and the stands are full. Players are  
already on the field.

VIRGIL CAPTION

And then it was time for  
Homecoming...

Panel 2

In the stands, Virgil (in tee-shirt and jeans),  
Chuck, Felix and Rick (who is wearing a ball cap) are  
in the crowd, yelling their heads off.

RICK

I tell you, some things **never** change.

CHUCK

Yep, our football team **still sucks!**

VIRGIL

Uh oh.—

Panel 3

Entire second tier. Firewheel is spewing flames on the field. The players scatter for cover.

OFF-PANEL VIRGIL

—Looks like the halftime show's starting early.

FIREWHEEL

**Static!** I **know** you're out there! Let's finish this.

Panel 4

On Virgil and the gang, everyone's on their feet. They're straining to hear. Virgil

CHUCK

What? We can't **hear** you up here, **moron!!**

VIRGIL

No, but I got a pretty good guess what he wants.

Panel 5

Close on Virgil, pulling his mask over his face.

RICK

You can't change in front of all these people.

VIRGIL

Maybe I **can**. Let me try something...

**Page**

Panel 1

Virgil is a silhouette being struck by a mighty lightning bolt. Just like Captain Marvel.

VIRGIL

(burst)

SHAZAM!

SFX

BOOM!!

Panel 2

Similar to previous, most of a chagrined Virgil's clothes have been burned off by the lightning bolt, revealing his Static costume beneath. Scraps of clothes hang pitifully off of him. Rick and the guys are laughing their asses off.

STATIC

Don't. Say. A. Word.

Panel 3

Static, on a HIGH-TECH FLYING DISK he must have got after the run of the series, zooms towards Firewheel, at mid-field.

STATIC

Look what you did, you wrecked the game —actually, I guess I should **thank** you for that. We were losing pretty bad.

FIREWHEEL

It's on, Static. I'mo **prove** the white man's superiority by **beating you down**, once and for all.

Panel 4

Static barrel-rolls, nimbly avoiding a fusillade of flaming swastikas.

STATIC

Could you just get **off** that? This isn't the time or place for a serious discourse on

Race. Race is complicated.  
You're **simple**.

STATIC

By the way, **love** the short  
shorts. What do you call 'em,  
"David Dukes"?

Panel 5

On Firewheel, running at super-speed, dodging  
electrical bolts from above and throwing multiple  
flaming swastikas.

FIREWHEEL

I'm gonna wipe that uppity  
smirk off your face. Then I'm  
gonna see if the black'll rub  
off you.

Panel 6

Panel left Static dodges a two-handed FIRE BLAST from  
an enraged panel right Firewheel.

STATIC

If **that's** all you want to know,  
just ask your **mother**. I was  
rubbing on her pretty good,  
last night.\*

FIREWHEEL

(burst)

Don't **talk** about my **mother**!

SFX

FOOOOSH

BOTTOM CAPTION

(small text)

\*Static never **really** slept with Firewheel's  
mother. It's just a tactic to distract him  
from the goalposts.

**Page**

Panel 1

Static dives off of his disk and TACKLES Firewheel,  
who is blasting more fire into the air, a wild shot.

STATIC

You misunderstand me, sir. I hold your mother in the highest regard. Did you know I even have an affectionate **nickname** for her?

FIREWHEEL

>whoolf<

STATIC

I call her **doorknob**, 'cause **everybody's** had a turn.\*

BOTTOM CAPTION

(small text)

\*Static never **really** called Firewheel's mother "doorknob". It's just a tactic to distract him from the goalposts.

## Panel 2

Firewheel is back on his feet, throwing a flaming punch at Static, who steps back clear of it. Static is pointing at something off-panel and behind Firewheel. Firewheel is unaware that he is in the SHADOW of a large, off-panel object.

FIREWHEEL

(burst)

You ~~444~~ !

STATIC

Want to hear a few **more**? I got **dozens** of 'em.

STATIC

Oops! Out of time, the **goalposts** are here.

## Panel 3

Wide, we see, crackling with Static energy, the entire goalpost has been ripped out of the ground and is hurtling towards Firewheel, who has turned just in time to see his impending doom.

FIREWHEEL  
(small letters, weak balloon)  
"Goalposts"?\*

BOTTOM CAPTION  
(small text)  
\*See? It worked! He never saw 'em coming.

Panel 4

Sound effect plus STARS AND BIRDIES only.

SFX  
WHUDD

Panel 5

COMMISSIONER GIL SUMMERS OFFICE. Static hovers outside of Summers open bay windows, levitating Firewheel, who is wrapped, ankles to neck, in tubing from the yellow goalposts.

VIRGIL CAPTION  
Later...

STATIC  
**Commissioner Summers?** I've brought you a little present.

STATIC  
Hmmm. You know, that "commissioner" gag was a lot funnier back before you actually **became** the commissioner.

Panel 6

Similar to previous, Summers is on his feet looking at Static.

SUMMERS  
It was **never** that funny, kid. But I'm glad to see you back. You planning on staying with us for a while?

STATIC  
Nah, this is just a one-off. But you know what they say, if the demand is there, I'll be

back with electrically charged  
bells on.

VIRGIL CAPTION

And that's pretty much it,  
kids-

**Page**

Panel 1

Virgil Hawkins is about 38 years old. He's dressed in Hospital Scrubs. Bouncing on his knee is a seven year-old girl, SADIE and a five year-old boy, LARRY. The children share features from both parents, light brown skin and long, curly hair. They're cute as hell. Virgil's been telling them this whole story!

VIRGIL

-That's the story of the very  
last time I went out and fought  
crime as **Static**.

LARRY

I don't **get** it though. That man  
hated people just because of  
what color they are?

Panel 2

Favoring Larry as Virgil explains.

VIRGIL

Not exactly, Larry. That was  
the **excuse** he used. What he  
really hated was **himself**. It's  
a sickness.

LARRY

That's sad.

Panel 3

Tighter. A smiling Virgil chucks Larry under the  
chin.

VIRGIL

Yes it is. But there's less of  
it every generation. Maybe your  
kids won't have to deal with it  
at all.

LARRY  
I'm not having no **kids**.

VIRGIL  
Yeah, that's what I said.

Panel 4

Wider. Favoring Sadie, she's tugging on Dad's sleeve for attention.

SADIE  
So Mommy never came to your  
tenth annivers'ry at **all**?

OFF PANEL FRIEDA  
No, I **didn't**.—

Panel 5

New angle reveals (38 year-old) FRIEDA, stunning in an evening gown. She's putting on an ear ring.

FRIEDA  
—but I wouldn't miss our  
**twentieth** reunion for the  
world.

VIRGIL  
Zoiks and Double hubba! Look at  
the wife!

FRIEDA  
C'mon, Virg. The babysitter'll  
be here in twenty minutes and  
you aren't even dressed!

VIRGIL  
I'll be ready.

**Page**

Panel 1

Background Virgil has his arm around Frieda's shoulders, she has an arm around his waist. The look at the kids in the foreground. Sadie has a towel around her neck like a cape, she's tying one around Larry's for him.

VIRGIL

We've done pretty well for  
ourselves, haven't we Frieda?

FRIEDA

We sure have. We've had an  
incredible life.

LARRY

Help me put on my **cape**!

SADIE

I **am**!

Panel 2

The kids stand, hands on their hips in heroic poses.  
Virgil and Frieda look on.

LARRY

I'm Static!

SADIE

I'm **Icon**.

VIRGIL

Traitor.

Panel 3

Closer on the kids. Sadie zaps her brother with an  
ELECTRICAL BOLT.

SADIE

**Got** you, Static!

SFX

ZZRAK

LARRY

Ow! Daddy, Sadie **zapped** me!

OFF-PANEL VIRGIL

I've told **both** of you, no  
zapping in the house!

Panel 4

On smiling Frieda looking up at a wistful Virgil.

VIRGIL

Those were such **fun** times...

FRIEDA

So are **these**, Love.

Panel 5

On the kids, running gleefully, their "capas" flowing behind them.

OFF-PANEL VIRGIL

I could still do it, you know.  
Pull out the old tights, get  
back into shape...

OFF-PANEL FRIEDA

Virgil?

OFF-PANEL VIRGIL

Yeah?

Panel 6

Frieda pulls Virgil's face down and gives him a formidable kiss.

FRIEDA

Absolutely not.

VIRGIL CAPTION

It was pretty clear I wasn't  
going to win the argument. I  
resolved to table it, at least  
for the time being.

### Page

Panel 1

Favoring Dharma's disappointed face. He's looking at a large Vision Globe, filled with Static's Face. Iron Butterfly is in the background, behind him.

IRON BUTTERFLY

It wasn't him.

DHARMA

No.

IRON BUTTERFLY

That means it probably wasn't  
**anybody**.

DHARMA

Probably.

Panel 2

Wider, Iron Butterfly is behind Dharma holding the  
knife high. She's going to stab him in the back.

IRON BUTTERFLY

Which means you're going to  
awaken Rift.

DHARMA

Yes.

Panel 3

On Iron Butterfly, knife held high. Tears run down  
her face.

IRON BUTTERFLY

Even though you believe that to  
be the very decision that  
destroys this universe.

DHARMA

Yes. I **have** to destroy it, in  
order to **save** it.

Panel 4

New Angle, Iron Butterfly holds the knife up to stab  
Dharma in the back. He is unperturbed.

DHARMA

Well? Aren't you going to kill  
me?

Panel 5

Iron Butterfly has let her knife arm drop. The Knife  
clatters to the floor. Unseen by Iron Butterfly,  
Dharma's hand GLOWS with PLUS ENERGY

SFX

(knife falls)

KLAK

IRON BUTTERFLY

I can't.

DHARMA

I know.

IRON BUTTERFLY

I'm sorry.

Panel 6

Dharma has turned around, he is projecting a POWERFUL STREAM of PLUS ENERGY at the off-panel Iron Butterfly.

DHARMA

So am I.

**Page**

Panel 1

Wide, Dharma's energy beam is blasting Iron Butterfly, battering her backwards. She's almost lost in the beam's glow.

IRON BUTTERFLY

(burst)

Earrhgh!

DHARMA CAPTION

This was my final clear vision of the future.

Panel 2

Dharma stands over Iron Butterfly's crumpled, battered, smoldering corpse. Her Armor is in shreds.

DHARMA

Kahina.

DHARMA

I promise: if it is within my power, I **will** bring you back.

DHARMA CAPTION

And so the story ended, as far as I could see.

Panel 4

Dharma holds Iron Butterfly's body in his arms, like in the Pieta. He's weeping.

DHARMA CAPTION

At the beginning, in an event someone whimsically dubbed "the Big Bang," I created some heroes, because they were **needed**.

Panel 5

Close as Dharma kisses Iron Butterfly gently on the forehead.

DHARMA CAPTION

Now it is time, perhaps, to let them go, and create anew.

DHARMA

Goodbye.

**Page**

Panel 1

Dharma, eyes closed, arms above his head, wind whipping past him, is FALLING RAPIDLY through a black void. He's laying as if on a crucifix.

DHARMA CAPTION

Every act of creation is a blind leap into an infinite void.

DHARMA CAPTION

A leap of **faith**.

Panel 2

New angle, looking down past Dharma, eyes still closed, if visible. He's falling towards RIFT (full figure), who sleeps far below.

DHARMA CAPTION

Experience has taught me that my faith is usually misplaced. For that matter, so is faith placed in me.

DHARMA CAPTION

But faith is all I have to  
offer.

Panel 3

New angle, straight on Dharma his arms spread as if crucified. He's still falling, but now his feet break the "surface" of Rift, which "splashes up", as if Rift were made of water. Remember, Rift is so big that we just see his texture, filling the bottom of the panel.

DHARMA CAPTION

So I cling to this merest of  
hopes:

SFX

SPLOOOSH

DHARMA CAPTION

Actions have consequences.

Panel 4

Close on the splash, from directly above, we see the SPLASH that shows where Dharma entered Rift. Radiating outward from the point of impact, are concentric "ripples" in the "fabric" of Rift.

DHARMA CAPTION

Actions create ripples that  
change the world around you in  
unforeseen but sometimes  
**wonderful** ways.

DHARMA CAPTION

Was **this** such an action? I do  
not know. Time will render its  
own judgment.

**Page**

Panel 1.

Dharma in fetal position, floating in the Blackness. He's taken Rift's place. Dharma's robe is now made of the same material as Rift.

DHARMA CAPTION

I do know this...

DHARMA CAPTION

The power is mine now. I feel it.

Panel 2

Dharma rises, crackling with Power.

DHARMA CAPTION

I flex my new muscles, the slightest twitch, and the fabric of spacetime is irreparably torn.

Panel 3

Earth in space, it's on Fire!

DHARMA CAPTION

Fundamental forces are no more. Galaxies boil away. The Earth falls into the sun, it burns, but it scarcely matters.

DHARMA CAPTION

The chemistry that made human life possible no longer exists.

Panel 4

Dharma is grim.

DHARMA CAPTION

And I have my answer. I **was** the cause of the end of all things.

DHARMA CAPTION

I grieve for all that was, all that could have been.

### Page

Panel 1.

Dharma in lotus position, eyes closed, floating in a black void.

DHARMA CAPTION

In the void, there is no time. I live there forever, mastering

my power, gathering my  
strength.

DHARMA CAPTION

I scour the multiverse, waiting  
for an opportunity.

Panel 2

Close on Dharma's face, his blind wyes now open.

DHARMA CAPTION

And there it is, a fluctuation  
in the Bleed, revealing the one  
place in all of creation where  
the world I lost can live  
again.

DHARMA

A Parallel Universe, much like  
the one I destroyed, mature,  
but malleable. At least,  
malleable **enough**...

Panel 3

Big Panel, most of the page. Dharma pushes the two  
worlds together, like Rift in Worlds Collide.

DHARMA CAPTION

I gather the remnants of my  
world, and graft it to theirs,  
knitting together the disparate  
histories as seamlessly as I  
can manage.

DHARMA CAPTION

Everyone will believe the two  
worlds have **always** been as one.

DHARMA CAPTION

No one will know what I have  
done.

DHARMA CAPTION

No one can **ever** know what I  
have done.

DHARMA CAPTION

Time unwinds and moves forward,  
The future unfolds, as it **must**.

**Page**

SPLASH

Similar to the Dharma pose on page 4 and 5. He sits in the void, brooding and studying variously-sized VISION GLOBES, but this time they include STATIC, ICON, HARDWARE, SUPERMAN, WONDER WOMAN, FLASH, GREEN LANTERN, et cetera - a good mix of DC and Milestone Characters- sometimes in the same Vision Globe. The two worlds are one, and he's watching.

DHARMA CAPTION

I am Dharma.

DHARMA CAPTION

It has come to an end.

DHARMA CAPTION

It is about to **begin**...

TYPESET CAPTION

*"Never think you've seen the last of anything."*

-Eudora Welty

COVER 3

Postscript

Runs above all DC and Milestone corporate credits.

TOP TEXT

(typeset)

*"And although I knew no one man could do much about it, I felt responsible. All our work had been very little, no great change had been made. And it was all my fault. I'd been so fascinated by the motion, that I'd forgotten to measure what it was bringing forth. I'd been asleep, dreaming."*

-Ralph Ellison

TYPESET TEXT

DC Comics Corporate Credits TK

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TYPESET TEXT

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