

Page

Panel 1

Biggest panel. 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.

Panel 2

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 3

Closer on Dharma.

DHARMA CAPTION

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

Panel 4

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 5

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.

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)
Aaaaaaaaah!

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 **unex**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

Entert**tain**ment, 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
pretern**atural** gift for
cun**ni**..."

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**.

Panel 6

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**.

Page

Panel 1

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 2

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 3

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**.

Panel 4

Exterior HARD CO. Night.

HARDWARE CAPTION

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

Panel 5

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.

Page

Panel 1

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 2

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 3

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

ANN

But you can't...

ALVA JR.

Curtis...!

DEACON

Curt, what about **Hardware**?

Panel 4

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

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

BARRAKI

Next 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**...

Panel 5

He is lifting the cage top off. Curtis smiles as the bird flies straight for the window.

CURTIS

Okay, buddy, this is it.

CURTIS

(burst)

Fly!

Panel 6

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 4

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 5

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

DHARMA

Mechanic?—

Page

Panel 1

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 2

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

Panel 3

Iron Butterfly and Dharma SLIDE into a VOID. The back
ground 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 4

Favoring Dharma.

DHARMA

(whisper balloon)

We are **inside** of shadowslide,
the extradimensional realm we
use for teleportation.

Panel 5

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

Hmmmm. 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

I'll bring all of 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 eyes now open.

DHARMA CAPTION

And there it is, a God dies in
the universe next door, his
death scream alerts me,
revealing the one place in all
of creation where the world I
lost can live again.

DHARMA

A Parallel world, 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

TYPESET TEXT

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TK