

No One Is Safe

All Will Be One

Millennium Apocalypse

Apocalypse

Now and Forever

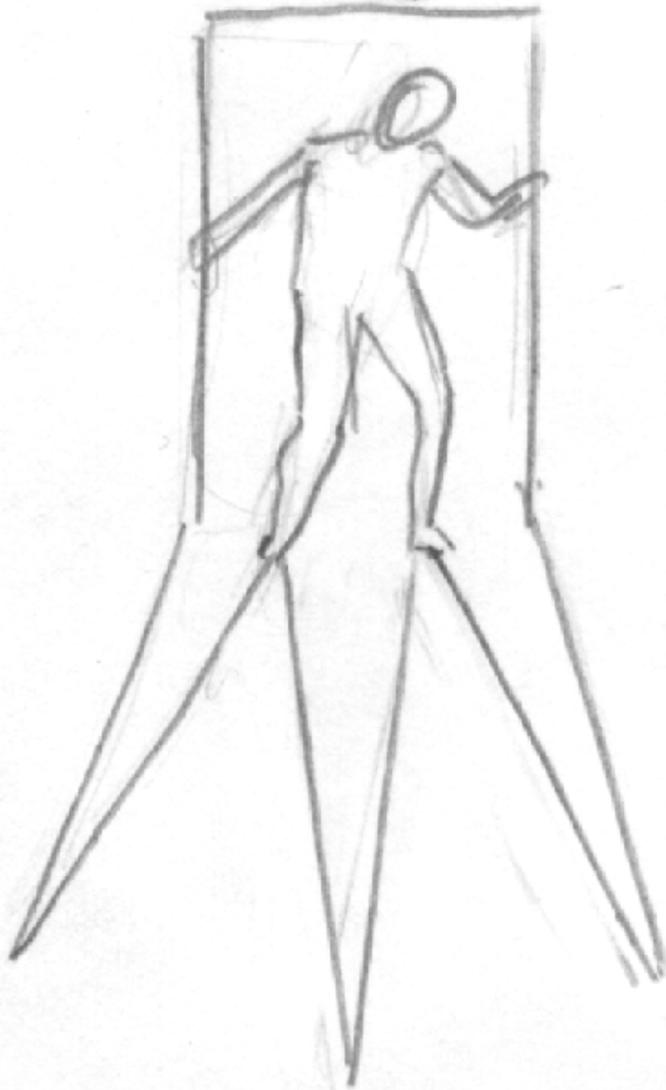
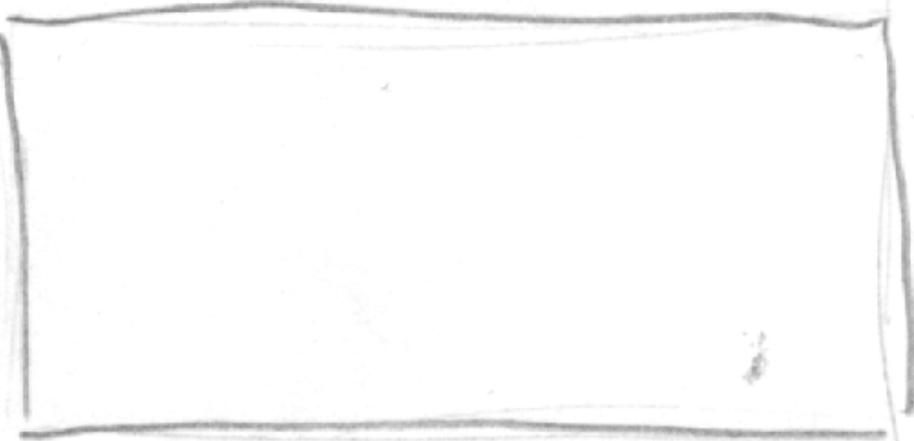
War of the Universes

Armageddon Is Absolute

UNITY 2000

By Jim Shooter

6.



UNITY 2000

Written By Jim Shooter

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Shadow Man #3
UNITY 2000 Teaser

Plot for five pages
6/10/99

By Jim Shooter

TITLE: When Shadows Fall

PAGE ONE:

Open with an ordinary, slightly nerdy guy, suit, no tie, knocking on Jack Boniface's door, as established in the early VALIANT issues of Shadowman drawn by David Lapham. This nerd has a hat on. As Jack Boniface, in civvies, answers the door, the nerd has his hat in one hand, held up against his chest-a perfectly normal gesture-except that his right hand and the gun it holds are hidden under the hat. Big panel as the nerd blows Jack away. Jack is taken completely by surprise. Who'd expect this nebbishy-looking guy to be packing heat? It's broad daylight, by the way.

PAGE TWO and on:

The nerd opens a fold gate and drags Jack's body through. People may see, but there's nothing anyone can do. Make it a point to show Nettie seeing and reacting.

Cut to Master Darque's palatial home. Darque is working on a plan-he has scrolls, maps, books and a computer on his desk. His sister Sandria is watching him poring over his work. She's drinking a brandy and otherwise relaxing. Darque is explaining something of his plan. He doesn't get too far before the nerd shows up, dragging the body.

Darque leads him to the body storage room and opens the door for the overburdened little guy. In the body room we see hundreds of dead Bonifaces. Some are in costume, many are in civvies. Some are the Bob Hall version and some are the Lapham version. Somewhere in here, Darque explains that the room mystically keeps the bodies from decomposing. Keeping bodies from decomposing mystically would have to have been the first thing ancient necromancers worked out, since they didn't have formaldehyde or refrigeration.

Anyway, the nerd deposits the body on a shelf and checks one more off of a long list on a clipboard. One more to go. He's eager to get to it, because after he finishes, Darque promised him that he'd get the nerd back together with his estranged wife. Sandria asks if she left him. No, says the nerd, he left her because of her psychotic rages. But it'll be fine thanks to Darque. Only one more Boniface to kill...

We get the drift in here that the nerd has been convinced by Darque that these Bonifaces aren't quite real-just some kind of clones or duplicates. So, it's not really murder, see? We also get the idea that this guy isn't too tightly wrapped.

Off he goes again. Darque warns him that the last one may be the most dangerous. Why? Darque says something innocuous to the nerd, but in his conversation with the sister afterward, we gather that it's the original VALIANT world, where the original Solar lives-as opposed to some of the less stable iterations.

Darque reviews with his sister the vision he had (Master Darque Vol. 1, Feb. 1998) in which he saw an Armageddon-like clash of worlds, with him emerging as a godlike figure. He also reveals that only one person can stop him-Jack Boniface. By eliminating every iteration of Jack in the multiverse, he can insure his victory.

The nerd shows up at (another) Jack's house. Jack no longer lives there. Hmm.

Cut to Solar-mine, please, red suit and all. I know you like the black Jurgens suit, Jim, but wait. It's coming. Solar is in an odd place, say sitting on an old car seat in a junkyard. It's a nice, quiet place, and the dogs are good company. He's looking up from reading a book as if something just caught his notice.

The nerd finds Nettie. From Nettie, he gets the story-verbally, please, I don't do flashbacks. Jack was killed trying to swim back through an underwater cave (the one he went through to get to UNITY, but that's not important here). He was eaten by an alligator.

Cut to Solar, flying toward New Orleans, book under one arm. Note, my Solar does not fly in that arms-out hero pose. He flies more or less upright, in a relaxed standing position. He never strikes any hero cliché poses. He should be looking around here, as if trying to home in on something he's sensing.

The nerd asks if there were any remains. Bits and pieces, says Nettie. She went back there every night with her friend, Mr. N'Dour, trying to find that 'gator. Finally got him. She herself cut open its guts and took out some rotted, half-digested flesh. (Alligators let their prey rot a little before devouring it.) Never found the 'gator's larder, but nobody could survive, missing what she recovered. He's dead.

The nerd wants to know where the remains are. Nettie, getting suspicious, tries to chase him out, but he says he's met plenty just like her (in other realities), and he knows that voodoo types like her are fussy about remains. Where are they? She won't tell, so he shoots her and looks around for himself.

Cut to Solar, closing in. He's picking up the vibe from the nerd clearly, now, hurrying to find out what's going on.

The nerd finds the remains in an urn, protected, presumably, by the same anti-rotting magic Darque uses. He takes them and escapes through a fold gate...

...just as Solar appears! Solar looks grim and dangerous.

Shadow Man #4
UNITY 2000 Teaser

Plot for five pages
7/8/99

By Jim Shooter

TITLE: Darque Designs

PAGE ONE:

In his storage room full of dead Jack Bonifaces, Darque is taking photos of the bodies. Lights, a backdrop and much other equipment is around. Some of the bodies are arranged in an artful composition before the backdrop. Others still rest on shelves. Darque is framing a shot using his hands in the classic manner. He's saying, "Too symmetrical."

In the background, the Nerd is entering tentatively, carrying the urn he stole from Nettie. "Mister Darque? Your sister said I'd find you here."

Darque turns to the Nerd, his back to the corpse-pile. The Nerd asks him what he's doing. Darque says something cryptic, but FYI, he's doing an artful photo essay re: multiversal murder. As they two talk, we see, but they don't, that the Bonifaces are moving, zombie-like.

The Nerd sees the zombies moving behind Darque, apparently threateningly. He squeaks a warning...

...and blows the Zombies to corpse cutlets using the glasses.

PAGE TWO and on:

Annoyed, Darque explains that the corpses were moving by his power-just striking a new pose, as ordered. On the other hand, the splatter effect the Nerd wrought has a certain je ne sais quoi...

The nerd shows Darque the urn. Not much in it, but some of the parts there are key ones. The rest of this Boniface is alligator poop on the bottom of the bayou, the Nerd says.

The Nerd places the urn where told and returns the glasses. He's eager to be reunited with his wife, as Darque promised. Darque says he's spoken with her and she's waiting for him. There's a car outside that will take him to her. The Nerd leaves happy.

Darque puts the glasses into a box. His sister appears at the door. She says a messenger is here. Good says Darque.

Darque and his sister have a drink in the study. Remember, they have, or seem to have an incestuous relationship, so hint at it. Darque reveals more of his plan. As Darque talks about the multiverse and his coming hegemony, he is pointing out the sigils and artifacts of power that he has gathered. He shows his sister a vision of the multiverse (in which we get a glimpse of my Solar). And, slowly, during the conversation, he transforms into the Starlin monster version. She says, "What big tusks you have." He replies, "The better to playfully nip you with." Love bites.

The Nerd is in the car. He's complaining about the chauffeur driving too slowly. If possible, we

see a messenger van passing them. The Nerd talks about his estrangement from his wife and how eager he is to get back together with her. The chauffeur suggests he stop for flowers.

Later the Nerd walks up to his wife's door carrying flowers singing "I've been working my way back to you, babe." He goes in. His wife is incredible beautiful (but a psycho, which is why she wound up with a nerd). He's all happy. Did she talk to Darque? Did he clear things up for her?

Yep. He told her what a runaround the Nerd has been, she says, opening a familiar box. She puts the glasses on and blows him away. A messenger arrives and asks if she has a package to go to Darque...

Cut to Shadow Man on the air. (Explain to Jim, please, about the standard layout for the radio show pages.) Shadow Man says Darque, if you're listening, I know you're up to something. The word's around Deadside, now that your cat's paw has turned up there. Darque calls in and says cryptic things. Shadow Man acknowledges that whatever Darque is up to seems to be off of his beat...but someone will stop him.

Darque laughs and hangs up. Shadow Man, a little frustrated, reaches for a cigarette. A voice-someone's suddenly beside him-asks if he needs a light. It's Solar, extending a red hot index finger...

Shadow Man is cool, of course, but he's as surprised as he gets.

UNITY 2000
Issue #1 Introduction

Everything was all right until a very dangerous man came along.

It didn't start with the Man in the Red Suit, but he sent it all spinning out of control. On April 15th, 1991, he made a catastrophic mistake that generated a black hole so powerful that it twisted timespace into knots and warped realities all across our many-layered multiverse of which our universe is a part.

Right away, everything was different-and not long after the event, things really started to go awry.

Now, the millennium is nigh and it is time for the chaos to come to an end...time for a new order.

UNITY 2000

UNITY 2000 #1

Plot for 22 pages

8/2/99

By Jim Shooter

INTRODUCTION PAGE: (Copy to follow with script)

(NOTE TO JIM[Starlin]: There seems to be a lot of explanation here, but it need not take up as much space as it would seem. I wanted it to be clear to you, but you don't have to allow for pedantic exposition in the art. I can be succinct. Give me that Kirby pacing, and we'll be okay.)

TITLE: Absent Friends

PAGE ONE: Darque (human form) and his sister arduously scale a somewhat craggy hill overlooking his palatial home. It wouldn't be arduous for you, but Darque, while capable physically, abhors exertion, and Sandria is wearing heels and her usual decadent attire. Jim, no more books in this lady's hands, please. Think decadent. I know that's hard for an upstanding Eagle Scout like yourself, but imagine you're me. On second thought, not that decadent...

Atop the hill, Darque pulls out a fold gate-close up, please-then tosses it out toward the mansion. I'm seeing this so far as three little panels across the top, leaving 2/3 of the page for the main image-the gate has expanded to vast size and is in the process of engulfing the mansion and environs. Darque and sister are in the foreground, but small, due to the vast scope of this shot. Darque is dramatically gesturing as if guiding the process of the transportation of his home (to the Lost Land).

(NOTE: Mike [Marts], this fold map/fold gate stuff confuses me-sometimes there seems to be a map one sticks a pin in to travel to some point, sometimes it seems that glowing rectangular portals just open up. I'm seeing something here that's sort of an expandable "portable hole." If it's inappropriate to call it a fold-something, I'll make up a new magic thing to cover it.)

PAGE TWO and on: Darque, excited by the fact that his plan is coming along so nicely, hurries back toward the grounds so the fold will sweep them up with it. He's pulling Sandria along by the hand so briskly she's stumbling. Sandria wonders why he dragged her out here in the first place. To see how wonderful he is, he says, and how lucky she is to be his...well, his. He says things about his plan for "the hegemony of Death."

Cut to an establishing shot of the home of the most recent version of Shadow Man (I'll call him LeRoi, from now on to minimize confusion). I understand it's a rotting paddlewheel boat out in the bayou someplace. LeRoi's car is parked outside. Inside the house we find LeRoi, looking like he's just getting home. He's troubled, but for him that means just a very faint look of concern. He faces a large ornate mirror (already established, ask Mike). Nettie appears, ghostly in the mirror. Nettie and LeRoi discuss the situation. LeRoi will make reference to his conversation with Solar. Nettie will talk about strange happenings in Deadside. She's calm, but it's clear that she's in great and growing danger. The Dead are getting feisty-as if they know/sense their day is at hand. LeRoi knows, too, that a universal horror show is about to start, and is pissed that the guy in the red suit, who seemed to be on the case, compared notes with him and split-as if he, LeRoi, was of no further interest. As they speak, we cut to Deadside. Nettie is being surrounded,

attacked by the various critters there, all chanting "Hegemony of Death...." LeRoi goes for his bear. Forget me, Nettie says as she's being overwhelmed. No way. This, at least, he can do something about, or go down trying. He tumbles into Deadside, arriving by Nettie's side, guns blazing. Pull back to reveal armies of Deadsiders surrounding them. It's Custer's last stand with way worse odds.

Cut to Solar arriving at one of Gilad's homes. Geoff the Geomancer, now twenty-ish is there with Gilad. Solar has just come from the Lost Land, where he has witnessed Darque's machinations. He explains what is happening-for this, Jim, I need some shots of other realities in the multiverse somehow projected by Solar. I'm thinking you should leave some blank spaces into which Mike and co. can drop shots pulled from memorable moments in the VH1 and VH2 stories-including at least one or two of Solar in another iteration. Time to go save the universe again says Gilad. Geoff says he's already arranged for help, and we see or hint at the arrival of the rest of the characters who will represent my old universe here: X-O, Archer (now mid-twenties), Armstrong, Sting, Chris, Flamingo and Zeppelin (all now mid-twenties), and Bloodshot. These are all the VALIANT versions, Jim. Use Lapham reference when possible. Bloodshot is the RAI #0 version. Gilad says if only Magnus could join us. Geoff says word has been passed down through time by Geomancers. He'll be there.

Cut to 4120 AD. This is the Utopian future of my Magnus. An old dude, 150 or so-but remember, everyone is pretty sound in the future-is at the hospital bedside of an old woman. It's one of those Manning hospital beds that has a big gadget at the head of the bed that sort of fits around your head. A robot nurse is in the room. The woman has died comfortably and as scheduled. The man goes home. Now what. Nothing left for him here. He pulls a tattered blue costume (he was wearing it when chewed up by an alligator) and mask out of a futuristic drawer. Hint that it's a Shadowman suit.

Shadowman, wearing the suit, visits Magnus, who also looks 150. Magnus lives on Goph Lev, but comfortably. Shadowman wants to know how to get to the Lost Land. He wants to go home to New Orleans to spend his last days, and he can get there from the LL. Magnus has been waiting for him. He warns him that he's in for trouble. Magnus takes him to the cave established in Magnus #12, and tells him to go through and wait for him, Magnus on the other side.

Shadowman does as told. Magnus shows up, but it's the young Magnus we're familiar with. (Old Magnus remembered this incident.) Shadowman tells Magnus his older self's instructions. Magnus will tell Shadowman the mission on the way. If not for prior experience with the Lost Land, Magnus wouldn't believe Shadowman. He'll also get across that events in the Lost Land are not preordained, despite the fact that in one timeline, he, Magnus must have survived. It's dusk, and getting dark (Darque?). Magnus has flying gear and, carrying Shadowman, he soars skyward.

Night. Cut to an establishing shot of Darque's house, which is now the center of a sky island fortress-nothing cliché and castle-like, please. An artist's fortress. Andy Warhol's fortress. Dali's fortress-hovering above the Lost Land. Solar and co. are seeing it for the first time. It's impressive. To the attack they go.

Cut to inside. Darque is in the midst of casting the spell that will solidify the hegemony of Death. Lots of magical artifacts, paraphernalia and mystic mechanism, please, Jim. There is, of course, a death theme to the magic. Sandria has some role that is not too taxing. Avoid cliches,

please. If you like, we can discuss and perhaps come up with some new wrinkles on the old sorcerer-casts-big-spell-schtick. One thought I had was that central to the process would be a computer-a weird Necromancer's Macintosh, calculating the Deaths and flow of power being used. Another thought: casting the spell doesn't occupy him much. It sort of goes along by itself, and he has time to talk, fondle Sandria, joke, etc. As the spell progresses, Darque becomes the monster Darque you established before.

Solar and the UNITY Force breach the outer perimeter of Darque's fortress. Darque has some kind of defense. What? I don't know, but nothing that can die. He needs precise control of death right now. Maybe it's something virtual-but-solid, generated by his Necro-Mac, or maybe it's stone and steel icons of death-or you think of something.

Quickly, Darque sees that Solar is the main problem. Using his own power-he hates to do that-he literally blows Solar away, over the horizon. Make this some form of the tattoo power we've seen from him in the past.

Now, the spell is reaching a critical point, and Darque is more occupied. The heroes have overcome his troops and are on their way in. Hmm. Darque animates the Boniface corpses and sends them out to fight.

That doesn't help for long. He tells Sandria he's empowering her, and she's going to have to fight. Me?! She says. Dressed for the boudoir, she meets the heroes at the gate to the inner sanctum. By now, Archer, Bloodshot, and several others have been left behind, wounded or incapacitated. We need Zeppelin, Gilad and X-O. Confronted by this unwilling warrior in satin, the heroes don't quite know what to do. Zeppelin tries to push past her. Sandria swats her away. A battle ensues. She has immense power, but no skill (or desire). At the risk of sounding antediluvian, she fights like a girl-who has strength and energy powers that make her more than a match for X-O. X-O has trouble with the idea of clobbering a woman, and gets thumped. Gilad has fought everything and, though outmatched, beats the crap out of her before finally she connects the one time it takes to break him badly.

As Magnus and Shadowman approach, unseen by the combatants, they see the end of Gilad's fight with Sandria. Wait here says Magnus, racing to the attack.

Nose bloodied, Face marked, satin torn, Sandria dusts her hands and turns to stumble back inside. Magnus tackles her, pounds her. Now she's mad. Fighting like a fury, if clumsily, she weathers steel (and teeth) smashing blows and after a heroic effort on his part, clobbers Magnus.

Battered, blubbing, Sandria enters the spell room. She's devastated, wailing about what's been done to her face. Darque has to make her beautiful again, etc. He's actually terribly amused by this, and jokes about it. Possibly he even does something sadistic, like slap her again to shut her up, or just twist her broken nose playfully. "Does this hurt?"

Suddenly there seems to be a problem. The computer can't finish the magic program, because one death programmed into it doesn't seem to have been consummated. Panicked, Darque checks. There's one more Jack Boniface! How can that be?

Darque is devastated. In seconds the sun will rise on the New Millennium here in the absolute time of the Lost Land, and the opportunity will be gone for a thousand years. There's no time to

find the Boniface. He could be anywhere in the multiverse. Just his being alive ruins everything.

Sandria bitter, hurting angry etc. laughs. He does something horrible to her...

Enter Jack Boniface. Darque can't believe his luck. All he's got to do is kill the old coot before the impending dawn. Jack isn't nimble, but there's a shred of the old Shadowman "It's all jazz, and I can play" left. He somehow evades and even (futilely) strikes at Darque. Darque rears back for the kill-and then, the sun peeks over the horizon.

Damn. Deflated, Darque just tosses the old guy away. He flips off the computer and sulks. Hmm, he thinks-the sun is...getting closer?

It's Solar, of course, recovered, blazing like the sun, and zooming back to the fray, hell bent.

Darque realizes that it isn't dawn yet-he made a mistake. His power is fading. Uh-oh. He orders the few remaining zombie servants to quickly gather up important artifacts and flees through a fold. Sandria staggers after him, barely making it.

Solar arrives. Jack Boniface dies in his arms.

Cut to LeRoi and Nettie, obviously having been fighting back to back for a long time, standing literally atop a mountain of dead things. It's over. The armies of things are retreating, or slinking away, actually, sensing that their hegemony is dead. LeRoi has a sense that this isn't all that will come of Darque's plan.

Back at Darque's house. Magnus is okay. He can have 40th century science brought in to heal everyone.

Later, Solar destroys the floating island spectacularly.

Cut to the requiem scene from RAI #0. Everyone is sad about Shadowman, but glad it's over.

Ominously, Solar says it's not over...

HERE ENDETH #1

UNITY 2000 #2

Plot for 22 pages
9/6/99

By Jim Shooter

INTRODUCTION PAGE: (Copy to follow with script)

TITLE: Death Warrant

(NOTE TO JIM: If possible, at the end of issue #1, have Darque revert to human form after failing to conquer the multiverse. If it's already drawn with him in monster form, don't bother changing it. I'll cover it in the copy.)

PAGE ONE: Darque, in human form, is practically dragging Sandria out of a fold gate, foreground. Make this an upshot to show the full scope of the place they're arriving, an underground site where an H-bomb was tested. This is a perfectly spherical hollow in the bedrock half a mile beneath the surface. It's thousands of feet in diameter, and its walls are glass-like, perfectly smooth fused rock. In the center of the spherical hollow is a bunker-like building of sorts, suspended by magic (or if you think it looks cooler, by massive cables or whatever)-Darque's last redoubt. Sandria, somewhat worse for the wear last issue, is asking where the hell they are. Darque gives a cursory explanation.

(ANOTHER NOTE: I'm walking a fine line with Sandria-Darque treats her (and anyone else in his power) with complete disrespect. She's no bimbo, though. She's dissolute, cynical and jaded, but certainly not stupid. She's as sarcastic and passively resistant to Darque as she can get away with, but ultimately, dominated by him. He doesn't realize how much she hates him.)

PAGE TWO and on: Darque strides into his small, thick-walled impregnable redoubt through a huge, vault-like door. Sandria stumbles and scrambles along behind him. She's asking about radiation. He says he's immortal, so no problem, and, (cryptically) well, she is what she is. Sandria wants Darque to use his power to heal the damage she suffered in the fight. As he gets himself a drink-brandy, probably-lights up a Gitanes and relaxes, he explains that he can't afford to waste any power. What if Solar came crashing in?

As if on cue, we see a six-foot circle being cut in the several-foot-thick wall-as if someone outside were using a super powerful cutting torch. Once the circle is finished, Solar dramatically kicks in the cut out section. Darque calmly rises and takes off his jacket (or shirt), preparing for his last stand. Sandria shrinks away, terrified that she's about to receive more abuse. Solar is also calm and laid back. He's supremely confident in his power. Darque puts out his cigarette and takes another swig of his brandy as Solar approaches. (NOTE: Jim, I need this admittedly quiet shot for exposition.) Darque turns to monster form for combat.

Darque begins hostilities with an all-out attack-whatever way you like, as long as he uses energy of some sort. It would be good if he used some kind of magical talisman or artifact, if possible, at some point in his assault on Solar, but no big deal if you can't work it in. Solar, relentlessly advancing, simply stops Darque's energy and runs it through his fingers like water, feeling it, trying to figure out what it is. He'll say something about how "necromantic" energy

seems pretty much like other energy to him, And that he doesn't believe in magic anyway, and that there's nothing special about the turn of the millennium, etc.-all this "magic" crap is all in the mind of the beholder. Solar knocks Darque out in some non-violent way, like turning all the oxygen in the air around him into nitrogen, or creating an electromagnetic field that affects his brain activity. Solar forces Darque to revert to human form, as using various energies and frequencies, he analyzes Darque in some visual way. Solar determines that Darque's power is so intertwined with his essence that it can't be removed without killing him-and he's not ready to do that. Yet. He feels that Darque is no longer a threat, though, so he turns to leave. As he does, Sandria asks if Darque's unconscious. Yes. That seems to make her evilly happy. Once Solar is gone, Sandria kicks Darque.

Solar, deeply troubled by all that has happened, leaves by flying through the hole he made previously and disappearing in a burst of Windsor-Smith prism sparkles.

Later, Darque wakes up, battered and bruised. Sandria is lounging, drinking a martini, and reading Elle magazine-complaining about how old the issue is. Doesn't he ever replace the magazines here?

Darque is surprised that Solar beat him up while he was unconscious and helpless. He wouldn't have figured Solar for the sadistic type. Oh, well, he can heal himself. Me too, while you're at it, says Sandria. Nag, nag, nag, he says, but does it.

Darque knows Solar isn't going to just let things lie. They have to get out of here-but Darque discovers that Solar apparently destroyed his fold gate (or fold gate power). They're imprisoned here! says Sandria. No, says Darque, opening a panel to reveal controls that look like they might be for detonating a nuke-he'll just have to open the "skylight."

Cut to a nuclear blast in the middle of the Nevada desert.

Cut to Darque, in monster form, climbing out of the crater carrying Sandria. He hates physical exertion, but it's easier in this form.

Cut to Solar, pondering the multiverse. He's someplace beyond the multiverse, outside of time and space, looking at all of existence. In chapter 17 of UNITY, page 12, Erica Pierce describes existence as a hurricane-a swirling maelstrom of timelines "...countless endings and beginnings chasing each other's tails." Please give me some thing very dramatic looking that graphically represents this. (Don Perlin drew a rather unimpressive swirl, so don't follow his visualization.) Pull in to a close up of Solar thinking grim thoughts. He senses something, a powerful, malevolent presence (the Creature) but he can't figure out what it is. He's going to look around...

Cut to a plump, pleasant looking Mike Hobson type-you remember Mike, right?-on the train going home from another long day at the office. This is Lou Morningstar, new character. Rumpled suit and tie, please, this guy's a middle management bureaucrat. The car is crowded. Suddenly, everyone but him gets up and leaves the car. Engrossed in his paperback, he doesn't notice. A voice says, "Is this seat taken?" Morningstar looks up to see Darque (human form) smiling down at him-and the empty car. (Darque cleared the car using his mind control power so they could speak in private.)

Morningstar greets Darque like an old pal. There's a panel of how's-the-wife-and-kids, then

Darque says he's here to call an old marker. Sure, says Morningstar-but only if you come for dinner.

Cut to the 'burbs-starting with an exterior establishing shot please that shows one of those Hellish, "upscale" middle class developments where all the houses are just a bit too close together and look alike. Cut to the Morningstars' dining room where his average-looking wife is clearing away dishes and the three kids are being annoying. Darque is complimenting Mrs. Morningstar and tousling the hair of the most beautiful blonde four-year-old girl child on Earth. This one looks like an angel, says Darque. Yeah, says Lou, as his wife herds the kids off to bed, she takes after her old dad. Every ninth one...

(We're going to slowly realize-though it will never be expressly stated-that Morningstar is Satan, retired and living in the suburbs. We'll gather that he's had many lives, many wives, been white, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Polynesian, etc. at various times-but always the Hobson type in any culture. It's part of his penance.)

Sitting at the table, smoking, drinking Johnny Walker Red, Darque and Morningstar talk. Darque apparently has occasionally arranged some outrageous hedonistic pleasures for Morningstar, who can't do things for himself with his own power without "starting all that up again." Darque says he needs some help. Transportation and a way to spy on someone. Morningstar would love to help, but...by the way, how is that lovely Sandria? Fine, says Darque. She's off to the Spa, then planning to test the limits of his platinum card on Rodeo Drive and Fifth Avenue. You know how vain she is. Morningstar can relate. He'd, uh, love to see Sandria again. As soon as the crisis passes, says Darque. Morningstar rummages through a typical, messy kitchen "junk drawer" and comes up with an old plastic measuring cup. Here, he says. This will help you check up on whomever. Then Morningstar digs in the pocket of a trench coat hanging on a hook and comes up with a crumpled bus transfer. This'll get you where you're going.

Darque thanks Morningstar. Morningstar is actually glad to help. He's a people person, and he likes this ambitious young man, Darque. He's a little surprised that Darque didn't at least try to manipulate him. Deceive the Deceiver? Nah, says Darque. This is straight up. (That's how desperate he is.)

Oh, and here's one other thing you may need, says Morningstar, handing Darque a cell phone. What does this do? Darque wonders. It's a cell phone, says Morningstar. Call me if you need to talk.

Darque asks Morningstar to give his best to the family, and uses the bus transfer to teleport away. The transfer teleportation effect should be visually much different than the fold gate effect. Something Biblical-looking, maybe?

Cut to a suite at the Four Seasons hotel in Los Angeles. Uniformed deliverymen are bringing in dozens of fancy shopping bags, dress boxes and other results of a splurge on Rodeo Drive. Sandria is directing them. Darque suddenly appears, startling the deliverymen. Sandria is totally blasé. Nothing Darque does surprises her. One deliveryman asks Sandria if Darque's a stage magician. Something like that, she says, handing him a wad of hundreds for their trouble. They leave.

Sandria holds up one of her spectacular new dresses in front of herself, showing Darque. He isn't

paying attention-he's looking for a bowl or basin of some sort. He finds a decorative bowl. He fills the measuring cup (from a bottle of Avian, chilling along with Champagne in a bucket), then pours it into the bowl. While doing this she's trying even harder to get his attention, dangling some decadent lacy under things in front of him. He says she may need those for Morningstar. Far from being appalled, she's actually thrilled that he's made her a date with that delightfully wicked man. Darque says something about being unable to be jealous where she's concerned-but one suspects that the idea of Sandria preferring someone else irks him.

In the basin, made into a scrying pool by the empowered water poured from the Devil's own mystic Rubbermaid measuring cup, Darque sees Solar arriving home...

...and we cut to Solar. Solar lives in a small but beautiful home in a spectacular setting in the Rockies somewhere. Gayle is waiting for him, doing something crafty, preferably throwing a pot. She was going to try to make a new one to replace his favorite, which she broke while dusting. He sees the shards sitting on a table. Clearly, though that will wait. He's upset. They sit to talk. Solar makes the suit disappear-Omar can give you reference for this-and becomes Seleski. Gayle lovingly greets and comforts her obviously troubled husband. (NOTE: in the "Shooterverse" Seleski and Gayle lived happily ever after.) Seleski explains that he's been on a little tour of the multiverse and he's seen disturbing things. He uses holographic projections to show Gayle a few of these. There are realities, he says, where their nice friend Gilad is an overzealous militant who calls himself "Warmaster" and "Fist" of something or other. There's a reality where two bozos with unlikely super powers (Quantum and Woody) talk nonsense to the air as if they were playing to an audience. There's even a reality where she, Gayle wears a funny costume and flies around acting like a Super Friend. (There was an old VH1 Solar where this happened, but forget that. Just make this visual up, please.) There are worlds where the laws of physics are mere suggestions, where voodoo, magic, ghosts and demons are real things, worlds that are childlike fantasies or bad parodies of comic books. Worse, there are worlds where he, Solar, has gone mad and perpetrated immense atrocities. (Show the Jurgens Solar destroying Earth, or the "star field" Solar from the Man of the Atom mini series destroying Seoul.) Not to mention the ones where he merely behaves irrationally...

Worst of all, trouble from these other worlds is spilling over and threatening to affect their world. He can't stand the idea of his world and Gayle being harmed again.

What is he going to do? Gayle asks. He's not sure. He'll think it over. It may be that he'll have to eliminate the doppelganger realities to preserve the primary reality.

Cut to Darque. He was afraid of that. This is no inconsiderable threat-this is the original Man in the Red Suit talking. Darque looks honestly scared for once. Sandria notices his discomfort with secret pleasure.

Cut back to Seleski's home. Gayle asks if these other worlds are real. Seleski says yes, unfortunately, but their lives are unreal parodies of existence in most cases. He pulls out the Solar comic book that started it all-the first Gold Key issue of Doctor Solar that inspired him to become a physicist (and ultimately led to all this happening). Give me a panel or two of him talking about the events that caused the multiversal chaos-his destroying the world and going back in time to save it. Don't do visuals for this bit. He feels very much responsible for the mess.

(NOTE MOSTLY TO SELF: I'm going to try to get the point across that in comic-booky worlds, the ordinary people are more or less cannon fodder for the super beings. That is, the way most

comic book worlds are presented, super beings essentially decide all outcomes and regular people are there to applaud, die, flee, be rescued or otherwise serve a supporting role. They're not normal worlds with a few abnormal people in them. They're worlds where you shine the Bat Signal when a crime is committed, where no one seems to mind that Dr. Doom took over New York again, because, after all, the FF saved them again, and nobody wonders why Superman chooses to catch some falling airplanes and ignore others.)

Solar adds that on top of everything else, he senses something horrible and pervasive in the multiverse (the Creature) that he can't pinpoint.

Cut to Darque. Hmm. He's sensed something odd, too. He tries to tune in on it, but the feeling seems to be coming from everywhere at once. He calls Morningstar.

Cut to Morningstar. It's late evening by now East Coast time, and Morningstar and his wife are in bed in the midst of some charmingly kinky activity. (NOTE TO ALL: My intention is for this to be very mild and discrete-no nudity, certainly, more humorous than steamy. Maybe he's wearing football shoulder pads a helmet and jockey shorts and she's holding pom poms and wearing a cheerleader costume, or whatever. The foot of their four poster bed could be rigged to look like a goal post.... Anyway, Darque says, I hope I'm not disturbing you. Morningstar says, well, he was about to go in for the score, but no problem, Darque. Happy to help. He goes into another room for privacy leaving his wife (tied to the goal post?).

Hmm, says Morningstar. Now that you mention it, I feel it too. He starts to tell Darque what it is and how to find it and how it might fit into his plans-though it will be very dangerous...

The next morning, Seleski and Gayle have breakfast. She asks him if he's decided what he's going to do. He doesn't know. She's completely supportive, no matter what he decides. She wants him to know that even if he wanted her to put on a funny costume and act like a Super Friend, she would. That's how much she loves him and trusts him. He feels the same way about her. They kiss. He puts the suit back on. He wants to go find out more. He prism-sparkles out. She starts to return to her work-but sees that the shards of the broken pot have been reassembled! A few tell-tale Windsor-Smith sparkles around it suggest how...

Solar enters subspace en route to visit Pierce. He senses the pervasive evil again, stronger than ever, stronger as he approaches the wormhole.

Solar finds the cincture wormhole where Pierce is imprisoned and enters. Pierce is a crumbling hag-that's how the wormhole affects its victims. Solar restores her to her gossamer fatigues human self so he can talk to her. He doesn't restore her power, of course-she's still weak and limp. Solar asks her about her plans for UNITY. She explains.

He seems as though he's considering it.

Meanwhile, Darque wends his way through subspace. He stops pours water from a flask into the cup, then into the air. No vessel required here in subspace, where everything sort of floats. In the drifting water, he sees Solar talking to Pierce, finding out how to unite the multiverse. He's surer than ever that Solar means to destroy all but the primary reality. He must find the Creature...

Darque can feel the Creature's presence but can't see it. He tries the cell phone again. To his

amazement, it works. AT&T, says Morningstar. Actually, Darque is closer to him in subspace than he was in California. And they have a great payment plan...

Cut to Morningstar at his desk at his hellish office job in one of those places with hundreds of identical cubicles. He's explaining to Darque that what he's looking for is a creation of the subconscious, so he'll have to look for it with his inner eye. Morningstar's boss suddenly starts yelling at him, so he says I gotta go. You're on your own. Be careful-you have no idea how powerful a thing you're messing with...

Cut to Darque. He concentrates, shifting his vision to encompass things of the mind...

...and suddenly, the stupifyingly huge, loathsome Creature looms before him. Even Darque is awed. It's a manifestation of Pierce's hateful subconscious grown to multiverse-threatening proportions.

Darque tries to convince the Creature that Solar is its enemy-and of course, anathema to Darque, he's telling the truth. The Creature is simple and instinctual, but not easily manipulated. It requires worship from Darque. It is a God. It regards his entreaties as a prayer. Darque is inwardly furious, but he can feel the Creature's raw power, sense its destructive potential rippling outward with every minute movement. It simply exudes power. Darque has to play along. It could destroy him with a shrug.

In the wormhole, as Solar listens to Pierce rave about UNITY and the destruction of the superfluous multiverse, the idea begins to sicken him. He (and we) also get the idea from her psychotic ramblings that some subconscious manifestation has occurred from Pierce's dementia.

Solar starts to leave. Pierce pitifully begs him to stay. He goes...but tipped of by something she said, he's wary.

Therefore, he is not utterly destroyed by the Creature's surprise attack. How do they fight? I'm not sure, maybe we can discuss. The Creature's power is psychic as well as sheer energy, and of course, it has created armies of sub-demons. We need a brief but visual battle. Solar can't really hurt the thing, but he gets in a shot that causes it some pain-and its paroxysm shakes all realities. Solar takes advantage of the break to escape. He races back to his Earth. The Multiversal shudder has caused earthquakes, tidal waves, and on his and Gayle's mountain-an avalanche!

Their house is flattened. Gayle is buried. He quickly moves tons of rubble and debris off of her. She's not breathing. Crushed. Dead.

Solar bends down beside her in anguish. He does something to her that resembles what he did to Darque when he was analyzing him and forcing him to change forms at the beginning. With tremendous effort and concentration, he puts her atoms back where they were.

She opens her eyes and smiles to see her beloved. He weeps.

Later, as he slowly reconstructs their house, Gayle, sitting at a picnic table with coffee asks him what he decided to do. He says grimly that he's going to wipe away the multiverse. Get rid of the mistake.

Meanwhile, Darque slips away from the now-quiet Creature. As he arrives back on Earth, he calls Morningstar, who's at Grand Central. I think we're in trouble now, says Darque. Yep, says Morningstar. We're in trouble...

The End

UNITY 2000 #3

Plot for 22 pages
10/13/99

By Jim Shooter

INTRODUCTION PAGE: (Copy to follow with script)

TITLE: Painful Truth or Apocalyptic Consequences

PAGE ONE: Flapjack panel-a shot of outer space. In the distance, we see a planet (the Earth of this parallel reality) that, even from here, we can tell has been ravaged. The oceans have been boiled away; the surface is entirely brown and desert-like, etc. In the foreground, we see a few Windsor-Smith prism sparkles, indicating Solar's impending arrival.

Big panel-a shot of the surface of the planet. It was devastated by the Solar of this parallel reality (some time ago) and it's a nightmare of death and destruction. We see a prism-sparkle burst, background, from which Solar has entered this reality, and Solar swooping over the ruins, appalled at what he's seeing. His thought-narration will tell us it's like this everywhere. (NOTE: Not even a rat stirring, please. There is no life whatsoever in this reality. Even the viruses have been wasted.)

PAGE TWO: Cut to Darque (always human form unless otherwise noted). He's sitting in a car (a rental-probably a full size American car) in the parking lot of a one story Motel 6 or other cheap motel out on a highway somewhere near the bedroom community where Morningstar lives. He does not look happy. Try to suggest that he's been sitting there for hours. (Ashtray full of butts, empty coffee containers?)

Suddenly, a motel room door right in front of the car opens and Sandria, half dressed, peeks out, motioning to Darque to enter. She looks happily sated. The number on the door, by the way, is 66, but apparently, at some time, some vandal added a third six with a paint marker. (There should be other graffiti in evidence, too. This is a dive.)

Entering, Darque, failing to hide that this bothers him, acerbically asks Sandria how her date was. She dreamily says she's never felt so humiliated, abased and used. It was wonderful. Yippee ki-yay...

Inside, as the aglow and content Sandria dresses, Morningstar comes out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel, scrubbing dry his hair with another. Darque is back to being his cool and blasé self. They need to talk. Darque says she'll see Sandria later. Using the bus transfer, Darque transports her away.

As Morningstar dresses (occasionally making some annoyingly complimentary reference to Sandria's talents), Darque explains (and recaps for the readers) how they're in trouble. (NOTE TO JIM: I'd prefer no flashbacks or special explanation panels. In general, I favor showing the reader what he would see if he were there.) Let's look in on Solar, says Morningstar. Did you bring the mystic measuring cup?

PAGE THREE: Cut to moments later. Darque is filling one of the car's wheel covers with water using the cup. He and Morningstar look in on Solar among the ruins. Oh, darn, says Morningstar. Solar would have to come across that reality. Stay with Darque and Morningstar, but show glimpses of the image in the water. As they talk and view Solar, Morningstar is putting items he used with Sandria into a gym bag. No dildos or anything too blatant, please-things like rope, spurs, a cowboy hat, toy sheriff's badge, etc. (We probably should have caught a glimpse or two of this stuff lying around the room before.) Darque could be lighting a cigarette and looking suspiciously at the toys Morningstar used. Show a shot of the water in the wheel cover in which we see a close up of Solar, angry, looking up at a 45° angle at something.

Cut to Solar. The camera's still facing Solar as he ascends a marble stair. His anger is growing with each step. Move the camera so we finally see what he's looking at-a throne atop a marble Mayan-style pyramid on which the dead, withered body of the Solar of this reality slumps. It's the Jurgens Solar. His costume is altered somewhat, still recognizable as a Solar suit, but a little more befitting a god.

PAGE FOUR: Cut back to the motel room. Morningstar is explaining that the reality Solar is in is one where an iteration of Solar went mad, wiped out all life and committed suicide. Morningstar is honestly moved by this. He's a people person, basically a nice guy-far from the cliché caricature of Satan as the nastiest, most pernicious of demons. (ASIDE TO JIM AND OMAR: Satan/Morningstar's only sin was pride-which made him want to be Number One. All he wanted was good things for people [which, by the way, in his opinion included hedonism and every pleasure imaginable].) Darque laments the waste of all that necromantic energy.

Back to Solar. He looks less angry and more resolute now. Though this reality is a nightmare, it's the perfect test site. He thinks for a minute about how to do what he has to do-then starts to shrink. He becomes microscopic...

...then sub-atomic. Solar becomes so small he can see (using some energy-sense to simulate vision) quantum particles. He starts making alterations in the energy levels of an array of particles. A chain reaction starts...

Back to the motel. They're not sure what Solar is up to. Suddenly, energy bursts out of the makeshift scrying pool in the wheel cover like Vesuvius erupting, blowing the roof of the motel room to quarks, probably flaring to the edge of space.

PAGE FIVE: The room is a wreck. There's a smoking hole in the ceiling. What the hell was that? Darque wonders, somewhat brushed back. Morningstar (amazingly calm, considering) says he sees now...Solar has collapsed that alternate universe back into whichever iteration it sprang from by "unraveling" its quantum field. There was some energy leakage through their view port. Morningstar makes a gesture and magically generates a visual aid that demonstrates one universe collapsing into another, sort of the way a telescope or one of those collapsible camping cups works. (NOTE TO JIM: If you can think of a good visual way to actually show Solar collapsing that universe back into the universe it branched off from, feel free.) Solar has learned to collapse universes back into their "parent" universes. He stopped at one this time, a dead one. Probably he was just testing out the technique. Now, though, in theory, he can collapse all of them back to the original from which they all sprang. (NOTE TO SELF: I thought you didn't do bald-faced magic anymore, says Darque. Well, I didn't have a pen and paper, says Morningstar.) So do something, says Darque. You have the power! Morningstar says no, it's

up to you. I can't violate my probation-in any obvious way, anyway-no matter what. How long do will it take him? Asks Darque. Morningstar says Solar'll have to do some prep...he makes some joke about it taking a week to make the damn thing...

They hear sirens (cops and fire department coming to investigate the apparent explosion in the room.) Hurrying out the door (while still pulling clothes on) Morningstar says he has to get out of here. If his wife ever found out he'd been in a motel room with some slut, she'd make his life Hell. Come back here, Darque yells, following Morningstar out.

PAGE SIX: This can't be all up to me! Yells Darque. Morningstar flees in his Ford Taurus. Frustrated, Darque smashes his fists down on the hood of his car, trashing it. (He's very strong!) Then, as cops arrive he transfers away.

Cut to Solar returning home. Gayle is there, but is strangely quiet, just sitting, waiting for Solar. When Solar enters, transforming to Seleski attire in the usual way, she stirs as if from a trance and warmly greets him. He tells her his little experiment went well. There's still a lot to do. He'll start on it later. He asks how her day went, what she's been doing. Not much... He notices there's no food in the house. Didn't she have anything to eat all day? Why didn't she get in the car and go to the market? She just shrugs it off. She's fine, she says (and apparently she is when he's around, but we suspect something's very wrong). Solar says he'll take care of dinner. He can get to the market at the speed of light. He leaves in a burst of sparkles-and Gayle sits down, apparently back in her trance-like state.

PAGE SEVEN: Cut to Darque sitting alone at a table in an artsy Soho-type bar. These places usually have expensive, modern-but-plush easy chairs instead of the normal bar furniture. He's drinking absurdly expensive Cognac and he's that grim, simmering kind of drunk. There are artsy wait staff types and a few other well-heeled patrons of this pompously upscale establishment in evidence. In the background we see Sandria entering carrying a very big, very fluffy pillow. She puts the very big, very fluffy pillow under her and sits at Darque's table. At first he won't talk-he's in a foul, defeatist mood. She's supportive. She's insistent. Soon, she's lifted Darque out of his despair a bit. He's starting to suck it up a bit. First, he says, he'll need to do some research, find out all he can about Solar. He knows a few people he can consult.

Darque wonders why Sandria's so concerned, so supportive. She usually isn't. He didn't think he put that in her. There's a love/hate relationship, she says, and when he's down, somehow her loving, nurturing side takes over. She may vomit...

Darque takes her in his arms and kisses her. Careful, she says, I'm still a little tender from playing cattle rustler-especially where he branded me. Darque starts to ravish her. This is rather indiscreet, she says, not really caring. With a thought command (as seen in the Master Darque special) he sends all the wait staff and patrons running toward the exit. Oh, reclaiming me, says Sandria. How male. How juvenile. How...nice.

(NOTE TO JIM AND OMAR: I know what you're thinking. No, I've never played "cattle rustler." I make this stuff up. Honest. Really. Stop laughing. Cut it out.)

PAGE EIGHT: Cut to Solar and Gayle finishing a candlelight dinner. There's a knock at the door. It's Magnus, but dressed in civvies-flannel shirt, hiking boots and jeans. Solar introduces him to Gayle, thanks him for helping and directs him to the guest cabin up the hill a ways. Solar mentions that there's wood for the fireplace but Magnus will have to split it. (NOTE: It's early January, of course, and it should be cold out. I know we had it looking summery last issue-

maybe that can be changed-but definitely make it cold here.)

After Magnus leaves, Solar tells Gayle that he asked Magnus to come here to watch over her. Magnus is the trustworthiest guy he knows-maybe tied with Gilad. (But Magnus is tougher.) He warns Gayle not to tell Magnus the truth about what he, Solar, is up to. He's worried that he might not understand. He hates to deceive him, but...

Solar kisses Gayle, then leaves in a burst of sparkles.

PAGE NINE: Up the hill, Magnus looks inside the cabin at the fireplace quizzically...then (easily) holds in one hand a foot-and-a-half thick log from a stack on the porch, staring at it quizzically...then figures out what the hell Solar meant and splits it with a karate-like blow. Soon he's sitting by a roaring fire thinking "how quaint."

Later, Magnus looks in on Gayle who's sitting as if in a trance. Magnus is concerned. He asks if she's all right. She comes out of it a bit and says she's fine. As Magnus leaves, though, he notices with concern that she's vegged out again.

Cut to an apartment in one of those low-income housing places. Darque and Sandria have come to see the Loremaster, who has the door opened a crack, still chained, and is cautiously peering out. (The Loremaster is a new character-I'm picturing Peter Sanderson-but feel free to design. He's a reference/research nut, one of Darque's many sources of info. He's the type who would put on two pairs of gloves before handling a comic book-a pair of surgical gloves, then a pair of cotton gloves over those. Super neat, very concerned for the well being of his books and stuff. Is the temperature ideal? Is the humidity low enough? Etc. He probably wears a surgical mask, lest he breathe on a book. If so, he can pull it down to talk to Darque.)

PAGE TEN: He lets Darque and Sandria in and we see the place is wall-to-wall, floor to ceiling files, books, videotapes, and stacks of those white comic book boxes. There's hardly room to walk. At a little desk or table, we see that he has a few comic books spread out and a large ledger-type book open. He was cataloguing a reality he discovered when Darque arrived-i.e., analyzing the comics and jotting notes in the big book. Loremaster politely offers the one seat in the house to Sandria. No! she says.

Darque tries to con/threaten/ manipulate Loremaster into providing info, but Loremaster is wise to Darque and his knowledge makes himself indispensable, so he's not worried. Maybe, he says, if Darque trades him Morningstar's measuring cup he'll provide info...

Darque takes the measuring cup out. Loremaster stares covetously. Darque asks for water. In here? says Loremaster? Never. The three things he fears are water, fire and bookworms. While Loremaster is ranting about the things he prohibits in his place and has his back turned to Darque, Darque fills the cup in a way we can't show. Loremaster turns to see Darque spilling a yellowish liquid on the floor. Loremaster's having apoplexy as the puddle spreads near his comics boxes. Darque lights up a smoke. In the puddle he shows Loremaster Solar, who's prepping the multiverse for collapse-doing the same thing we saw him doing on page four, but on a grander scale. Darque has no compunctions about laying waste to Loremaster's store of knowledge, because if Loremaster doesn't cooperate, everything will soon be quantum dust. Loremaster is terrified. He'll do whatever he can to help.

PAGE ELEVEN: Darque says he needs to know all there is to know about Solar. Loremaster says,

funny, he was just adding a few notes to his catalogue entries for that reality. We see now that on the desk the comics include the first Gold Key Doctor Solar issue and Solar Man of the Atom #1 from VALIANT. Darque notices one of the comics on the desk-Super Mario Brothers-and says, this is a reality? No, that one's just to read, says Loremaster. It takes a special set of circumstances to generate a reality from a work of imagination. He'll do research and get the details re: Solar for Darque. Get on it, says Darque. Hurry.

Outside, Sandria says to Darque, now what. Darque pulls out a list (show it, but have the bottom of it off panel) of names: Bloodshot, Quantum, Woody, The Trinity, Ninjak, X-O, Harbingers, Warmaster... I've got people to see, says Darque, that I'd best see alone. See you at the Westport mansion.

PAGE TWELVE: Cut to Morningstar's home, later, where Morningstar is in the middle of painting a room. He's on the cell phone just finishing a call to someone. One of his children, the beautiful one who looks like an angel, is playing with the paint and is making a mess unnoticed by Morningstar. The kid says, Daddy! What's that? Morningstar turns to see a huge (mystical) fiery clock face hovering in the air. It shows one minute after eleven. Morningstar is so awed and scared he drops the roller. I'll tell you later, dear, he says. Don't tell your mother or anyone that you can see that. Only you and I can. Now run along. She does.

Cut to posh, high-ceilinged drawing room in Darque's Westport mansion. There is an ornate bowl, perhaps on a tripod on the table, and beside it we see the measuring cup. Darque has rigged some kind of magical contraption that works like an overhead projector that is projecting the image in the water onto one of those built-in drop down screens (the kind you use to show slides). Darque is looking in on Gayle. The cell phone rings. It's Morningstar. He tells Darque that the Armageddon Clock has appeared. It's counting down to the end of all existence.

PAGE THIRTEEN: Now will you help? says Darque. I can't, says Morningstar. You don't understand. It's like I'm in prison, see? You can't imagine the consequences for me if I break my covenant. Even if it is the end, I'd rather cease to exist along with everybody else than risk the alternative. But, I have gotten you some help. They'll be along soon.

Darque starts to argue, but he hears Morningstar's wife screaming at him, a loud crash and...he's cut off.

Sandria enters. You have two visitors, she says. Behind Sandria we see Grigori the Giant. He's not quite as tall as Don McGregor and average build. He's a nice looking guy, dressed in casual clothes. He carries a backpack or sports bag. Where's the other one? asks Darque. Look up, says Sandria as she walks away.

Darque looks up and sees Anansi clinging to the ceiling. Anansi is black, thin and wiry, long-limbed, but not freakishly so. He's a handsome guy. He has those Ricky Williams short dreads that give the appearance that one has a tarantula on one's head. He moves like the old Ditko Spider-Man. He's dressed in a costume that an African spider man-god might wear-use spider-type markings or African (Sierra Leone) motifs or, preferably, both. He's a trickster-but a basically good guy. He's clever, sly, smart and a little nasty. He has a (magic) silk rope. He can stick one end and flip one end between two points and travel along it like a spider, descend on it like a spider, etc. Take pains to make his use of it spidery-i.e., he uses both hands and both feet, limbs bent at knees and elbows when he crawls along it. It stretches endlessly, so he can weave a

web out of it, but he has to actually weave it. Avoid the swinging-on-it-like-a-rope thing that Spider-Man does. Anansi is very strong, very, very quick, very stealthy and very limber/agile. He has a weapon-a gadget on his hand or wrist that has two curved "fangs" that he can bring to bear when he wants. When he stabs an enemy with this fang-weapon, poison is injected that paralyzes them temporarily. He's more likely to spring suddenly on an enemy, wrap himself around them and "bite" them with his weapon than punch them.

Anansi descends on his rope like a spider, and hanging upside down tells Darque that he admires some of his work, if not the ends he's sought. Whatever.

PAGE FOURTEEN: Morningstar asked him and Grigori to come help so here they are. Darque says he's heard of Anansi. His talents may be useful-but what is Grigori's contribution. Grigori says watch-and starts to grow. He becomes huge, so tall that he has to crouch to fit in the room. His clothes shred off in the process, but he's wearing some kind of very minimal (very elastic) costume underneath. (The reason he carries a bag is spare normal size clothes in case he has to change size quickly, without stripping down first.) At his huge size, Grigori is powerfully built, Schwarzenegger-muscular and a little monstrous. As Stan used to say, make him monstrous but glamorous. Fearsome but not repulsive.

Oh, says Darque.

PAGE FIFTEEN THROUGH TWENTY-TWO: What's the plan? Anansi asks. Watch, says Darque, pointing at the screen. On the screen we see X-O emerging from a transfer gate and rocketing toward Solar's cabin. Cut to the cabin. X-O rips the front of it off. Gayle looks up, but doesn't react much (due to her trance-state). X-O tries to grab her...

But Magnus comes to the rescue. Big battle. If you need suggestions, let me know.

In the middle, at appoint where X-O is winning, cut to Darque and company. How did you get X-O to go after Gayle? asks Anansi. Simple, says Darque-though it pained me greatly, I told him the truth. I've been doing that a lot lately, and it worries me...

Back to the battle. Magnus is one of those guys who finds a way to win against almost anything. He's good at finding mechanical weak points, too. He wins dramatically. I'd like it to be a battle to the death, please-not that Magnus would willingly kill, but pretty much the only way to stop X-O is to kill him.

Just as Magnus wins, Solar comes zooming in. He came as quick as he could.

They look around warily. Magnus wants answers. Solar, has to lie. (Gayle, of course, perks right up when Solar arrives.)

We cut to Darque and company. Perfect! Says Darque. Grigori doesn't get it, but Anansi figures it out right away. Darque expected X-O to fail. Besides, there are plenty of X-O's, a whole multiverse full. Plenty more when they need another.

Now what? Why they sue for peace, strike elsewhere at Solar's world and friends, beg and plead, take hostages, offer to bargain, stab him in the back and run, send waves more warriors at him, lie, cheat, delay and wait for an opening. This is war...

Not the end, but enough for this issue.

UNITY 2000
Issue #4 Introduction

The whole of existence is a multiverse made up of myriad universes existing side by side. The Man in the Red Suit, called Solar by some, regards all other universes, or realities, as distorted echoes of his, the true reality-mere quantum shadows, yet real enough to breed evil and pose a threat. To insure its safety, he seeks to destroy all universes save his own.

Necromancer Alexandre Darque, who has, indeed, posed a threat to Solar's reality in the past, finds himself thrust into the unlikely role of Defender of the Other Realities, orchestrating a guerrilla war against Solar using catspaws to strike at Solar's friends, family and world.

UNITY 2000 #4

Plot for 22 pages
11/20/99

By Jim Shooter

INTRODUCTION PAGE: (Copy to follow with script)

TITLE: Touched By a Fallen Angel

NOTE: The VALIANT heroes, as they would have been if I'd stayed with them, i.e., the characters in the original UNITY seven years older, will be referred to as the VALIANT characters. The characters that are from the universe we're going to end up with, i.e., the characters that share Darque's reality, will be referred to as Prime Universe characters. All others are from the miscellaneous iterations of the VH1, VH2 and Acclaim Universes.

PAGE ONE: Full page splash. In a parking lot of a suburban shopping mall, the VALIANT Pete Stanchek, or Sting-now in his mid-twenties, remember-is in pitched battle against the Armorines. Sting has wide-ranging mental powers. He can levitate himself, other people and things, read others' minds, manipulate others' minds, shield himself with telekinetic force, and generally use vast amounts of mental energy to accomplish physical effects. You'll have to ask Omar what the Armorines do. They seem to be a poor man's Iron Man clones with sort of Gardner Fox Green Lantern powers to boot-i.e., making big axes or claws and such out of energy. Remember, Sting behaves in a naturalistic way. He flies in a more or less upright posture. He doesn't strike super hero poses. He isn't all that well built. Check the old Lapham stuff. He may not even be wearing his costume-it's up to you and Omar. The Armorines, by contrast, are very comic-book super hero-ish. They do every cliché.

PAGES TWO AND THREE: The Armorines are trying to capture Chris (Sting's girlfriend) and Sting, who were shopping at the mall. As Sting fights, she's scrambling around, trying not to get caught or killed. She has no powers, but she offers suggestions to Sting about what to do-actually, she barks orders. They're at the end of their relationship and the friction shows. He barks back at her telepathically. They're having a hell of an argument about their relationship (mostly laid between the lines) in the midst of this chaos, so give me a few angry/hurt looking close-ups. Chris is the tough one, so no tears or very sad faces on her, please.

The Armorines are causing enormous collateral damage and injuring, perhaps killing civilians. Sting is preventing them from doing worse. He has the upper hand-but, suddenly, Prime Universe Bloodshot appears through a transfer gate and gets in a sneak attack. Sting's in trouble...

PAGE FOUR: Cut to a deck or terrace of Prime Universe Darque's Westport mansion. Darque and Morningstar are in the hot tub. Morningstar has the day off, sort of-the wife is visiting her battleaxe mother. Morningstar and Darque are talking about how well it's all going. Darque takes the measuring cup, which is sitting within reach, scoops some water out of the tub and pours it back in-turning the water around the two into a steaming scrying pool. The image visible in the water is of Bloodshot fighting Sting. Sting, apparently, is on the ropes. They look in

at two other battles going on-the Trinity Angels (as they appeared in their book-not the new Prime Universe version we want to end up with) fighting VALIANT Archer and Armstrong in a nuclear plant, and Ninjak fighting VALIANT's Gilad in a suburban diner. Show Solar's friend John Veerhusen (NOTE TO JIM: He's essentially John Veerporten) in the background.

PAGE FIVE: Mystic minions wait on Darque and Morningstar, bringing them drinks, etc. Darque and Morningstar look in on Solar, who's busy making quantum level changes in the multiverse, setting up the dominoes as it were, for the big implosion he plans. Solar is missing his left hand and part of his left forearm-there's a glowing stump where it ought to be. (We'll see in a minute, he's given his hand to Geoff the Geomancer. He did the same thing in the old UNITY #0 book. Other slivers of arm will turn up later.) (NOTE TO SELF: Darque makes a joke about Solar spreading himself too thin.) As we watch Solar, we see him open a warp to check in on Gayle. We see that Gayle is now guarded by Magnus and Geoff, who has the hand. Cut to that scene and show that Gayle is perky and seemingly her old self (due to the presence of Solar's hand). She's doing some kind of chores, chatting with Geoff and Magnus.

PAGE SIX: Magnus and Geoff are reassuring, confident. As Gayle goes about her business, though, leaving Geoff and Magnus alone for a moment, though, their demeanor changes. Magnus is having major suspicions about this whole thing. Geoff has unrelenting faith in Solar, but...he has noticed Solar acting a little funny. And there's something wrong with Gayle. Magnus agrees, but she seems fine now. Geoff says something about the hand. Anyway, there's something bad going on with Gayle. He can't-or won't-say what.

Morningstar gets out of the tub, roiling the image as it fades. Break time's over. He's going to get back to it. He's got to finish up before his daughter Lucy gets here. He hasn't seen her for a while. She's one of the special children-the one of every nine that's like him. He can't see her usually because his current wife doesn't know about all the past lives he's lived. Darque doesn't move, but says he's got to get back to work, soon, too-conning more people into serving him by telling them more or less the truth. Morningstar commiserates. Wrapped in a towel, he heads back into the house.

Morningstar enters a posh bedroom where Sandria, wearing only a blindfold, a grass skirt and a lei is tied up spread-eagled, standing between the bedposts-and smiling about it. Putting on a Hawaiian-type headdress, Morningstar says, now let the sacrifice to the volcano god resume!

PAGE SEVEN: Cut back to the hot tub. Darque is out of the tub now, wrapped in towels brought by minions. He's watching (in the hot tub water) Morningstar and Sandria starting to play again. This really irks him. A voice overhead causes him to look up. Anansi is dangling from his silk rope just above Darque. He's laughing about what Morningstar is doing to Sandria-discreetly out of our view, of course. Darque says something about it not being so funny if it's your sister. Anansi says baloney. He sees through Darque's deception. Sandria's a piece of you that you split off to contain your weaknesses and frailties, he says. It's a lot of the gentle anima side of you, and because you're a misogynist, self-worshipping egotist, it's in the form of a woman. That makes it worse, says Darque, and what if Morningstar found out? He knows and he loves it, says Anansi. Now, what's up? Come with me, says Darque. We're going to do some more recruiting.

Cut to Sting and Bloodshot. Sting is on the ground about to be given the coup de grace by Bloodshot. Chris is screaming at Sting-and there's a bit of accusation of failure in her words-to do something. An Armorine is seizing Chris.

PAGE EIGHT: Suddenly, reinforcements arrive-Flamingo, Quasi and Zepplin. Zep carries a sliver of Solar. Quasi, with prodigious strength dismantles an Armored. Other Armoreds wait patiently for their turn to get clocked by Quasi-like bad guys in a Kung-Fu film. He tears another one apart while others wait, etc. Flamingo pulls Chris away burning/melting the armor of the Armored who had her. Zep goes after Bloodshot.

PAGE NINE: With Solar-type energy from the sliver of Solar, she savagely blasts Bloodshot, damaging him severely, horribly. He starts screaming "mayday" into a Secret Service-type mike.

Cut to the gate of the Westport mansion. A fancy car is pulling out. Darque and Anansi are in the back. Grigori is driving, perhaps wearing an incongruous chauffeur's hat. Grigori says they're getting a mayday call. Darque uses the bus transfer to open transfer gate, which hovers in mid air near the driveway as they drive away. Darque explains that some of the combatants are multiversal cannon fodder-pale, often ludicrous iterations of people. If they die, they die. Those from his world, however, he makes a special effort to help if they're in trouble. Not that he gives a damn about them. It's just good PR while he needs cooperation.

PAGE TEN: Meanwhile, Zep presses her attack. Bloodshot drops Sting (or loses that arm). A transfer gate appears. As Bloodshot dives through it, Chris screams something about what a loser Sting is. Close up of Sting, with suicide in his eyes. Suddenly, Sting propels himself through the gate right behind Bloodshot, just as it closes!

Bloodshot arrives, stumbling, hurt. Sting thuds onto the ground behind him. Bloodshot whirls, gun blazing-but there's nobody there. He shrugs and stumbles away.

Pull back to reveal that Sting is hovering fifteen feet overhead. He whisked himself straight up-the quickest way to hide. He's hurt, suicidally depressed and a mess. He watches Bloodshot leave-thinking about swooping down on him and renewing the fight. That's why he followed him. But-he's not up to it. No fire left in his guts.

PAGE ELEVEN: Pulling himself together a bit, he settles down to earth and looks around. Weird. It seems to be Earth, but...it's not. He takes a step toward the mansion-but his ordeal catches up with him...he starts to crumple.

Someone catches him as he falls, lowers him to the ground gently and cradles his head. He looks up. It's the most beautiful young woman he's ever seen. (Lucy, FYI.) (NOTE: If it's not too late, Lucy should be a different race or ethnicity than Morningstar and his current family.)

Cut to wherever Quantum and Woody hang their hats. (I have a couple of old Q&W scripts, but I don't know if they're up to date. Help, Omar! It would be nice if we could give them a bit of business that demonstrates their powers, too, but we'll need to talk.) Darque is finishing his pitch for help. Quantum takes him seriously, Woody says smartass funny stuff, but bottom line, they'll await instructions-says Quantum. Darque leaves them having a pleasant discussion between themselves.

PAGE TWELVE: Outside, Darque is joined by Grigori and Anansi. Grigori wonders why they need to tag along. For protection, says Darque. You're my bodyguards. And what would we do against Solar? Grigori asks. (NOTE TO SELF: Foreshadow in copy Grigori's power.) Buy me a second or two with your deaths says Darque, so that I have a one-in-a-million shot to kill him.

Oh. (NOTE TO SELF: Besides, Darque says, up close and personal murder isn't like Solar. Wiping away the multiverse by futzing with the quantum field is different-sanitized. He's unlikely to attack. It would be, in a way, acknowledging that we're real, Darque says.)

There are a number of iterations of Solar in the Multiverse, says Anansi. Maybe you should enlist some of them. There's even one here (in the Prime Universe). No, says Darque. They tend to be unstable.

Cut to Lucy's pad, a hip, Soho loft. Sting is lying on her couch and she's tending his scrapes and bruises. He's in love at first sight. She says she has that effect on a lot of men. But, she's attracted to him, too. That's rare. She wonders if he's not one of her kind.

She explains that she was on her way to meet her dad, but when she saw him, she knew she had to help him. Destiny? Providence? Whatever. He's enraptured. "You're the mind reader," she says, smiling, gazing into his eyes, "but you're thinking very loud-yes, let's make love."

PAGE THIRTEEN: Cut to the Westport mansion. Darque, ineffectively hiding the fact that he's disgruntled, sits in the parlor with Morningstar, now clothed, and Sandria, still in her now-tattered grass skirt and lei, but with a sheet haphazardly wrapped around her. She looks extremely disheveled, babbling happily about how the volcano kept erupting and erupting. Morningstar says, yeah, well the universe may well be over soon, might as well have some fun. Morningstar makes the Armageddon Clock appear. It shows 13 minutes to midnight. Time is running out.

Speaking of fun, Morningstar says, how was the Masquerade last night? (NOTE TO JIM: As Omar may have mentioned, Darque was used in a couple of issues of Shadow Man, so we're acknowledging them for continuity's sake. Just a mention or two-you won't need reference.) Darque says he gathered an immense amount of power there. It may come in handy, but it isn't enough to fight Solar. Again, Darque asks Morningstar to help. Again, Morningstar declines. He's out of the biz of messing with existence-though he admires Darque's style and ambition. Boy, it takes him back...

Anyway, says Morningstar, you may be going about this all wrong. The girl, Gayle, is the key. Darque says Solar will defend her most strongly, so he's chosen to feint at her and strike elsewhere at Solar's other friends. Morningstar lectures on the weakness that Gayle represents and makes oblique reference to Adam and Eve. He points out that even Darque can't prevent himself from reacting over Sandria. Give it some thought.

PAGE FOURTEEN: Morningstar wonders where Lucy is. She should have been here by now. He'll wait a bit longer. Darque says he has some research to do, and leaves. As he does, we see that Anansi and Grigori are standing guard just outside the parlor door. Sandria, her sheet falling away, languorously drapes herself over Morningstar from behind, saying that the sacrifice is still-barely-breathing. He may have to plunge the dagger again...

Cut to the Loremaster's place. Darque wants to know more about Solar. Loremaster shows him the original Gold Key Doctor Solar comic and the one with the time travel story. (NOTE TO OMAR: I assume you'll drop in scanned images. The time travel issue of Doctor Solar was the one I used in VALIANT's Solar Man of the Atom #2.) Darque wonders why these comics exist here, in his reality. Loremaster says they exist in many realities that split off from the fundamental reality. (At this point, they and the readers think that's the VALIANT reality.) Outside, with Anansi

and Grigori, Darque ponders. (NOTE TO JIM: He has the comics.) Anansi suspects Darque is onto a breakthrough. Perhaps, says Darque. He needs to do some more checking...but first, they have another ally or two to recruit.

PAGE FIFTEEN: Cut to Lucy's place. Lucy and Sting sit at the kitchen table (all furnishings here very mod and hip, please) having coffee, talking. It looks like they've just showered-she has on a silk bathrobe and has a towel wrapped turban-like on her head, he's got a towel around his waist and one around his shoulders and his hair is wet. They talk for a moment about their almost magical attraction. She knows he's had a tough life, especially lately. She's comforting, reassuring, loving. They talk also about why he came here. When he mentions Darque and the evil he's up to (according to Solar), she gasps. Her father is at his place now! Is he involved? asks Sting. Daddy's a bit of a reprobate, she says, but, no, he wouldn't be party to anything really bad. Let's go see what's up.

Cut to the mall parking lot where Sting fought the Armorines and Bloodshot. It's dark out now but the place is cordoned off and swarming with police. News crews are doing live on-the-scene reports. Pull back to reveal that Zep, Flamingo, Quasi and Chris are watching from the mall rooftop, arguing about what to do. Chris is tearful, despairing-it's her fault, she says, that Sting went after that monster (Bloodshot) alone. Quasi says hanging around here is a waste. If Sting were coming back, he'd be here by now. It's been hours. Flamingo tries to comfort Chris. Zep's thinking. She knows Solar pops in and out of places. Maybe his arm-sliver can take them wherever Sting went...

Cut to inside the Westport mansion. Lucy and Sting look around. The door was open, but no one seems to be home. Lucy opens a door-the bedroom door as it happens. "Daddy?" she says. (She's cool, not shocked or scandalized-maybe a bit amused.) We see a discreet hint of what she sees-Daddy and Sandria en flagrante delicto.

PAGES SIXTEEN - EIGHTEEN: Moments later, Darque, Anansi and Grigori drive toward the mansion. As they near the gate, there's a burst of Solar sparkles...and Zep, Quasi, Chris and Flamingo appear in front of the car. Reacting instinctively to protect his team from being run over, Quasi slams shoulder-first into the car like a linebacker making a tackle. Pavement cracks and buckles under his feet as the force of the impact drives him back. The car crumples as if it'd hit a telephone pole.

Anansi and Darque stumble out of the back of the car. Anansi is okay, but Darque is bleeding from the head, injured. Zep recognizes Darque (I'll explain how in copy) and yells for her team to get him. Anansi tells Darque to go to the house and calls for Grigori-still in the car, recovering from the impact. He comes around when Anansi calls and grows to giant size so fast he bursts through the roof of the car. As Darque stumbles toward the house, the Harbs attack and Anansi and Grigori fiercely defend.

PAGE NINETEEN: Cut to Solar-he senses something. He checks around. The Multiverse Monster is quiet-that's not it. He starts to realize that a piece of him is in Darque's reality! That's not good...

In the bedroom, Morningstar sits on the edge of the bed, naughty bits covered by a strategically placed pillow. Sandria is on the floor, also somehow discreetly covered, clinging to his leg like a woman wrapped around Conan's leg in a Frazetta painting. Sting and Lucy sit nearby. She's supportive, affectionate. Morningstar is explaining what's up. It's a lot for Sting to

grasp. Suddenly he looks toward the door, sensing something. Darque stumbles in. Sting mentally jacks him up against the wall. Darque, taken by surprise, injured, can't resist. Sting digs into his mind...

PAGES TWENTY AND TWENTY-ONE: Outside, Anansi and Grigori are fighting valiantly-make 'em look good, especially Anansi-but losing ground. Suddenly, the odds change as Prime Universe X-O, Prime Universe Quantum & Woody and Prime Universe Bloodshot show up. Uh-oh. Despite Zep using the power of the Solar sliver to the max, the Harbs are quickly being clobbered.

Suddenly Solar appears! The balance of power swings again. Solar extends his arm, making the "stop" gesture, fingers spread-then fires a beam from his visor that passes between the fingers of his outstretched hand, and as it does, splits into four beams. Each beam strikes an enemy with tremendous, explosive force. Solar is shouting at the Harbs to get their asses out of here. Transport home.

Suddenly, Sting comes soaring out of the mansion. He attacks Solar, ripping him with sheer mental force. (NOTE TO JIM: Solar, being made of energy can be ripped, shredded, pierced, etc. Energy flares out of him through the tears and rifts, momentarily, but he can quickly pull himself back together. See early VALIANT issues.)

PAGE TWENTY-TWO: The Harbs think Sting is crazy. Sting quickly explains-telepathically-what's really up. He gives 'em directly what he got from Darque's mind.

They're stunned. They've been helping a guy who's planning to kill zillions...

Darque's allies are momentarily unsure. Sting tries to convince them that he and the Harbs are on their side. Believe him, says Sandria, approaching, wearing (only) a trench coat (Morningstar's). Darque sent her to tell them that.

Solar recovers to find himself facing Sting, the Harbs and all Darque's troops. In the background we see Prime Universe Ninjak, Trinity Angels and Turok approaching. It looks grim for Solar...

Here Endeth the Issue

UNITY 2000 #5

Plot for 22 pages
12/29/99

By Jim Shooter

INTRODUCTION PAGE: (Copy to follow with script)

TITLE: Treachery, Lechery and Strange Bedfellows

(NOTE: Remember, Solar's left hand and part of his arm are missing. Zep and several other VALIANT heroes have arm-slivers and Geoff the Geomancer has the hand.)

PAGE ONE: Full page splash. Outside Darque's Westport mansion Prime Universe X-O punches a hole right through Solar. (NOTE: This is like punching a hole in the sun. Solar's plasma-like super hot interior energies do severe damage to X-O's armored fist-though the armor is ultra-hard enough so it isn't completely vaporized. Every little splatter of Solar's plasma sears, vaporizes or burns what it touches.) Other Prime Universe characters including Anansi, Grigori, Ninjak, Bloodshot, Turok, X-O, Quantum & Woody, and the Trinity Angels may be seen in the background rushing toward/taking shots at Solar, or you can save them for page two.

PAGES TWO AND THREE: As the other Prime Universe characters attack and Solar dazedly defends, falling back under a hail of devastation, the Harbingers look on with confusion and indecision. (Oh, by the way, X-O should be hunched over in pain, holding his smoldering, damaged hand, here.) Yes, Sting showed them that Solar's up to no good, but a minute ago the guy was their ally. Sting is shouting at the combatants to stop. He wants to talk to Solar and find out what and why. Nobody's paying any attention.

PAGE FOUR: Cut to the front porch or a terrace of the mansion with a view of the battle. Morningstar, Lucy and Darque, (who's still rapidly recovering from his head wound) watch the proceedings. Maybe Lucy is checking/commenting on the progress of Darque's remarkable healing (so I can explain). Sandria arrives and drapes herself around Morningstar. In a couple of panels, Lucy and Morningstar bring Darque (and the readers) the rest of the way up to speed about what happened last issue.

Cut back to the battle. Solar's down and in trouble. Zep thinks it's time to intervene-they'll kill him. Sting, reading Solar's mind says, no...wait.... Suddenly, the piece of Solar Zep has flies from her hand, zips to the midst of Solar's attackers and emits a burst of explosive, concussive force in all directions that blows his attackers back. Sting, forewarned, shields the Harbingers (using mental force-see the Lapham issues). (Though shielded, the Harbingers react, of course, as anyone would seeing a powerful explosion going off close by-even through a bombproof window.)

PAGE FIVE: All except the Harbingers are down, injured. The arm-sliver reunites with Solar. (The sense of the battle is this: Despite the numbers against him, Solar is way more powerful than all of them combined. Surprise and aggression carried them so far, but now that Solar's bought

himself a moment to gather himself, the attackers are in trouble.) The Trinity Angels, who were farthest from the blast recover and dramatically do the transformation to our new Trinity Angel.

PAGE SIX: The Trinity Angel attacks. Cut to the terrace or wherever Darque and the others are. Perfect, Darque says. If only Trinity Angel can buy some time. He says he's going to take some advice Morningstar gave him. Make this a background riff-Morningstar can't help but leer. Sandria may say something about a three...or would it be fivesome? (NOTE TO OMAR: Don't worry, I'll be careful.) Darque concentrates, doing his mind-push thing. (Show Lucy in the same panel asking Morningstar what Darque's doing so I can explain it to the readers.)

At first Solar has some difficulty with Trinity Angel-magical energies still being somewhat mysterious to him. As they fight, we see several of the other Prime Universe pawns of Darque (your choice) pulling themselves together and heading through a transfer gate. (They're off to kidnap Gayle, but don't let on yet.)

PAGE SEVEN: Solar forms an energy shield (having just figured out how Sting does it) that effectively blunts Trinity Angel's attack. Then, in a non-violent way he incapacitates her-perhaps leaving her suspended limply unconscious in the air (if she had been flying previously).

Sting, with the Harbingers behind him, confronts Solar. Solar admits that he's planning to wipe away all but his reality. He can understand if Sting and company don't want to help-but, he warns them (calmly, no gritted teeth) not to oppose him.

Solar looks up-a cold, hard stare-toward the terrace or whatever where Darque, Morningstar, Lucy and Sandria are. Focus on Darque and company. Darque doesn't flinch. Morningstar is shrinking back a bit, sort of hiding behind Darque (as if afraid to be seen for fear that Solar will rat him out to his wife), Lucy is desperately worried about Sting and Sandria is still lustfully clinging to Morningstar.

PAGE EIGHT: Solar suddenly notices that several of the Prime Universe combatants aren't there anymore. Sting tells him that they've gone after Gayle. (He's telepathically sensed this.) He doesn't approve of such tactics...

Solar, desperate to reach Gayle, exits in a burst of sparkles. Chris starts in on Sting: What the Hell did you tell him for? Lucy comes running up to Sting and embraces him. Chris is shocked, shattered-at first-but quickly sucks it up. Oh, she says. Sting, holding Lucy (who's oblivious to everything but Sting-thank God he's safe!) tells Chris it's over, go away, and he's not interested in her bitching anymore. Never again. Fine, says Chris, holding her head up, unconvincingly hiding her hurt. Saves her having to dump him.

Cut to Solar and Gayle's home. There was a brief but fierce fight here. The house and grounds are a wreck. Magnus is dead and horribly so. Gayle is gone.

PAGE NINE: Solar finds Geoff, mortally wounded, huddled in some rocky corner where he made his last stand (using Solar's hand as a weapon). Geoff is seething with anger at Solar. He and Magnus used the power of the hand to discover what Solar was really up to. Solar used and betrayed them. Geoff dies cursing Solar.

The other VALIANT Universe heroes, several of them equipped with Solar arm slivers, appear in a burst of sparkles-Archer and Armstrong, Gilad, X-O and the original version of Bloodshot from RAI #0. There's a tense face-off. X-O wants to attack Solar-but Gilad holds him back. It would

be suicide.

PAGE TEN: X-O shoves Gilad aside and swings at Solar. Solar-who's ready for this one-blocks it with a Sting-type shield. (NOTE: Have Solar driven back, shield and all by the force of the blow. Have the ground plowed up under his feet and in general show the effects of the concussion of the impact-like a big cannon being fired, it shakes everything up for some distance around. The blow dents Solar's energy shield.) Solar recovers instantly, seizing X-O in some kind of energy field so powerful it cracks his armor and almost crushes him. Aric spills out of the shattered armor like a walnut meat from a broken shell-injured, but alive. (NOTE: Aric is the type who would wear nothing under the armor, so have him naked or nearly so.) Solar's smoldering with barely-contained power. Maybe he has a corona around him like the sun, with solar flares arching out from it. He's on the verge of killing them all...

PAGE ELEVEN: Suddenly, Zep, Quasi, Flamingo and Chris step out from a transfer gate. Chris sees Magnus and grief stricken, hysterical, races over to the body. (Magnus is actually her son.) Zep grimly says she has a message for Solar from Darque: He has Gayle, so Solar'd better behave. She's beyond his reach and safe only as long as Darque actively maintains her safety. Don't even think about doing anything.

Solar, trembling with rage and frustration, vanishes in a burst of sparkles.

Archer asks Flamingo where Sting is. He stayed on Darque's world, she says, looking at Chris grieving over Magnus's savaged body. Chris lost two men today.

PAGE TWELVE: Cut to Darque's study. Darque and Morningstar confer privately. Darque knows that Solar won't simply go away. Morningstar makes the Armageddon Clock appear. It's relentlessly advancing-it's now four minutes to midnight. That proves that the danger of the multiverse being destroyed is far from over. By the way, says Morningstar, extra casually, where is Gayle? Darque won't tell. Morningstar acts blasé, as if he really doesn't care. Darque says he has to address the troops. Morningstar will leave him to it, he says. He'll say good-bye to Sandria and go home. His wife is probably ready to kill him by now.

As Darque is about to enter the ballroom, Anansi tells him that all those they contacted showed up-and many brought friends. Darque enters.

PAGE THIRTEEN: The spacious room is packed to the rafters with super-people from every reality. There are multiple iterations of many characters. Try to feature some of the lesser characters and obscure characters as well as the well-known ones. You can also make a few up, and very discreetly include some non-Acclaim characters, if Omar says okay.

PAGE FOURTEEN: Darque addresses the crowd. He's honest with them-Solar will eventually come for him. They have to defend him for the sake of their realities. And, if possible, take the fight to Solar.

Show a fly on the wall-it's Morningstar-observing.

Moments later, Darque speaks privately to Anansi and Grigori. He won't tell them where Gayle is either. Again we see the fly. Anansi notices it, too, but says nothing.

Follow the fly as it wings to Sandria's quarters. The fly turns back into Morningstar right before

Sandria's eyes. She's mildly surprised-not at the transformation, but that Morningstar is able to use his powers so overtly.

PAGE FIFTEEN: Give me a panel for Morningstar to talk about free will-and the consequences he'll face for exploiting it. Sandria's immediately inclined to be amorous, but he has something serious to talk about. He tells her he needs her to find out where Gayle is being held. He promises her that he'll make her a whole being, independent from Darque and strongly implies that they'll be a couple then. He does this in a sincere, romantic way-on bended knee, if you like. It has the feel of a romantic proposal (rather than a deal with the devil, which it is). Sandria smiles.

Cut to a place beyond reality where Solar is drifting, thinking. Yes, Darque has Gayle, but perhaps he can bargain with Darque. Darque is unlikely to play the trump card of destroying Gayle unless he really has no choice. To get Darque in a position in which bargaining is possible, first Solar has to strip away Darque's defenses.

Suddenly, Solar is attacked by a squad of Darque's defenders. Your choice.

PAGES SIXTEEN AND SEVENTEEN: Fight. Solar may (reluctantly) do serious damage to or kill some or not-but no Prime Universe fatalities please.

PAGE EIGHTEEN: Solar escapes his attackers, but is attacked then by the multiverse monster.

Cut to Darque watching Solar in a scrying pool. Solar gets in a shot, which as before, causes multiversal tremors, shaking Darque's mansion, tossing furniture around and roiling the waters. Sandria enters, struggling for balance. What is going on? Darque explains that the multiverse monster has accepted him now. It does him favors-grants boons. All that humiliating groveling paid off.

PAGE NINETEEN: We and Darque see Solar get away. Damn, says Darque. He was hoping for a quick end to this. The stress shows as he vents to Sandria a bit. This is an uncomfortable role for him, being the defender of the multiverse, the hero, if you will. As he speaks, show the many heroes on guard outside. He's used to being the one lurking, waiting to strike, attacking, not defending. Sandria comforts him. She's supportive, caring...and also seductive. She plays to his ego (Morningstar? Just pretending to be enraptured with him to make you jealous, etc.) She's part of him, after all. He falls for it and starts to tell her where Gayle is, smiling at his own cleverness.

Cut to Morningstar arriving home. His wife is in full battleaxe mode, out-of-her-mind-angry that he's been out fooling around. We see the older kids in the background eavesdropping, restraining giggles over daddy's impending tongue-lashing/thrashing. We get the idea that Morningstar has been somewhat henpecked in the past-but not this time. Snarling, he reveals his power/nature to her, turning into a terrifying vision of Satan. (NOTE TO JIM: Please avoid dead-on clichés but make the image classic enough so that the readers will grasp the fact that he's Satan.)

PAGE TWENTY: Satan/Morningstar transports the terrified wife and older kids to a deeper level of Hell (probably Elizabeth, NJ) in a burst of fire and brimstone. The little girl who looks like an angel-let's call her Muriel-remains She isn't scared at all. She's standing there cute as Hell wearing a little junior policeman's hat and holding a drippy squirt gun. She's just curious.

Morningstar changes back. (NOTE TO JIM: Unless otherwise stated, he'll appear in human form henceforth.) He explains -simply-to Muriel what's up. Since he's going for a "jailbreak," no need to put up with bitchy old mommy anymore. Muriel's okay with that. Her biggest concern right now is that her squirt gun is broken. It leaks all over her. Hmm, says Morningstar. That could be just what I need. He asks if he can borrow it. He has a plan.

The phone rings. It's Sandria. (If we show her, she's in bed, looking a little haggard.) She has the info. Good, says Morningstar. Keep Darque occupied for a while. He's off somewhere, says Sandria. He got a call, from Loremaster she thinks, and left.

Morningstar tells Muriel he'll be right back...

Cut to Pierce's prison. She drifts in her decomposed state. Morningstar enters in a sulfur and brimstone cloud. Morningstar revives her as Solar did and briefly introduces himself. They have much in common. They're both in prison, for one...

Pierce is, of course, suspicious at first (suspicious that this is merely part of her delirium, suspicious of Morningstar's motives if he's real) but, what the hey. He says has a proposition for her. He suspects that Solar will soon come visit her, looking for help. He'll probably allow her to re-gather enough of her power to serve his purpose, but not enough to threaten him. He suggests that she help him, and at the appropriate moment use this-he gives her Muriel's water pistol-to destroy him. Then, she can do as she pleases. He wants only a small thing in return...

PAGE TWENTY-ONE: He just wants her to pass along a bit of information to Solar (Gayle's location). And, of course, he hopes that in the future, once Solar is gone and she's the ultimate power in the multiverse, she'll be nice to him. Pierce senses that the squirt gun is far more than it appears to be. Okay. Deal. How shall we seal the pact? says Morningstar, suggestively. Come here, says Pierce. There's something intoxicatingly sexy about you, she says. You can't imagine how lonely I've been... (Remember, Pierce was one horny, corrupt, sick puppy). She starts to ravish him.

Suddenly Solar enters. Pierce scrambles to look innocent and nonchalant like a teen-age girl whose daddy walked in on her and boyfriend necking. The squirt gun seems to have vanished (concealed mystically). Solar notices, of course, that Pierce is human-looking. She glibly explains that away. Maybe he gave her a bigger booster shot of power last time than he meant to, or maybe it means she's getting saner.

Morningstar is nowhere in sight-but there is a fly floating nearby. Solar doesn't notice.

Solar tells Pierce he needs her help and starts to explain... We cut to moments later. After presumably being brought up to speed, Pierce muses that she thinks she knows where Gayle might be-as if she were figuring it out herself. If possible, show her casting a sly glance-unnoticed by Solar-toward the fly. She agrees to help. Come with me, then he says, and they exit.

Morningstar becomes himself again, mopping his brow. Close call.

PAGE TWENTY-TWO: Cut to Loremaster's place. Loremaster is explaining to Darque what he's learned-that the comics that inspired Solar were indeed created here, in this, Darque's universe.

(NOTE TO SELF: "Lazy writer" riff.) Furthermore, they were created with a magic typewriter provided by Morningstar. What? says Darque. He's brushed back by the implications...

Suddenly the multiverse shakes again. Loremaster's books and such tumble everywhere.

The Armageddon Clock appears! (Only Darque can see it.) It's one minute to midnight!

Darque says uh-oh. I'd better go.

Cut to Solar and Pierce engaging the multiverse monster in combat-and kicking ass.

Here endeth the issue.

UNITY 2000 #6

Plot for 22 pages
1/14/00

By Jim Shooter

INTRODUCTION PAGE: (Copy to follow with script)

TITLE: Ashes, Ashes, All Fall Down

(NOTE: Final issue!)

PAGE ONE: Full page splash. Solar and Pierce battle the multiverse monster. They're working as a team, Solar shielding Pierce from the creature's attacks (using the new trick he picked up from Sting last issue) while she returns fire.

PAGE TWO: At Solar's direction, Pierce severs the creature's connection to their reality's quantum level (slicing off one of its tentacles-this will protect Solar's Earth from earthquakes caused by the creature's thrashing). Then, Solar and Pierce attack with a vengeance.

Cut to Morningstar's study-where Darque and Morningstar had their after dinner chat in issue #2. Open on the Armageddon Clock reading as close to midnight as possible to show and pull back to reveal Darque and Morningstar. The place is shaking, and showing substantial damage from creature-induced earthquakes. Darque is confronting Morningstar-Loremaster told Darque last issue that theirs is the primary reality. Sure, says Morningstar, I'm here-and in all the multiverse, there's only one of me. So what? It's what Solar thinks that matters. (The tremors should continue throughout their conversation.)

PAGE THREE: Darque pulls out a copy of Doctor Solar #1-the comic book that inspired Phil Seleski-and says he's found out it was created right here in their reality. Furthermore, he says, the cartoonist who made it used magic tools provided by Morningstar! These, says Darque, opening an ornate chest (suitable for holding magical implements-show it in the background somewhere prior to Darque's opening it). Inside are a typewriter, ratty looking legal pads, pencils, brushes, pens, a T-square, some paper and a large bottle of Black Magic ink. Darque wants to know what the plan was. Did Morningstar engineer all this? No, says Morningstar. He was just trying to help the guy. Morningstar gave him the tools to create a reality-then he didn't have to make stories up anymore, he could just watch what went on and write it down. Anyway, now the spell is broken and the story was never finished. The tools are just trash now. Even this? asks Darque, holding up the ink. That wasn't magic in the first place, says Morningstar. It's just ink.

There's a particularly violent tremor, knocking Darque and Morningstar off their feet and doing great damage. (Don't break the inkbottle.) Darque pleads with Morningstar once again to intervene, but Morningstar again says he'd rather face oblivion than violate his parole.

PAGE FOUR: Darque fills the measuring cup with water from a broken pipe and creates a scrying puddle on the floor. Solar and Pierce are winning, but the creature is fighting back.

Maybe the creature produces armies of little creatures by "budding" and sends them to attack Solar and Pierce. Solar and Pierce may be momentarily pushed back, but before we cut away, we should see them on the offensive again.

Damn, says Darque. I'm going to need more power. He leaves through a transfer gate.

Sandria steps out from around the corner where she was eavesdropping on Darque and Morningstar's conversation (Morningstar was aware of this-he and Sandria are co-conspirators now.) Sandria asks how much of what Morningstar told Darque was true. Some, says Morningstar. He didn't really plan this-he just stirs up trouble sometimes to see where it leads-hoping he can capitalize on what develops. Morningstar picks up the inkbottle, holding it as if it were a Faberge egg. I was looking for this, he says. Nice of him to bring it to me.

Sandria begins to get amorous in that who-cares-if-there's-an-earthquake-take-me-now wanton way, but Morningstar's all business. Too much at stake for fooling around. Sandria had better get home and act normal so Darque suspects nothing.

PAGE FIVE: Cut to Muskogee, Oklahoma, to the Edgewater Nuclear Facility, where outside of the complex, far enough away so we get a good establishing shot, Darque steps out of a transfer gate. Here, as everywhere else in the world, there is evidence of the earthquake-but no major damage here, please. Darque steels himself-he's taking a chance coming here...

Cut to the office of Phil Seleski (of the Prime Universe), where Phil is hard at work on his computer. Gayle enters. They're both concerned about the quakes and their effect on the reactors, but Phil says so far so good. Per his instructions, the boys in the control room have banked the mains and vented the lines to the safety tanks. He hugs Gayle affectionately, reassuringly. She leaves, and he turns to his work again.

Darque steps out of the shadows. Phil is surprised, but not as panicked by the sudden appearance of a stranger in his Secured Area office as, say, I would be. Darque obliquely explains his need for help. Phil says no, he tries not to interfere. Darque says bull, you're using your power right now to minimize the quake under the plant. Yes, says Phil, but no, he won't help Darque. (His refusals to help Darque are eerily similar to Morningstar's prior refusals. He's paying a penance of sorts, too.) Darque leaves through a transfer gate. Phil is already back at work.

PAGE SIX: Cut to Deadside. Darque is arriving through a transfer gate at the entrance to Deadside. (NOTE TO JIM: There's a shot of this in the Master Darque special, but Omar may have better reference-he probably wants it to look like it does in the video game.) Deep in Deadside, Darque comes to a windswept hill where there is a tall, gnarly table upon which rests a computer-a workstation for the wicked. Make it a very realistic computer with CPU tower, printer, keyboard, monitor and speakers. It's filthy, and has been banged around a bit. It also has extra wires, high voltage lines and thick cables jammed into it at random points through jagged cracks in the casing. These cables snake along the ground and/or arc off into the distance suspended like phone wires on telephone poles. This is the Purgatory PC. Make it look Hellish and horrific. Several horrific looking denizens of Deadside are at the computer, pattering with it (getting e-mail from Hell?)

Darque shoos away the monstrous users (who fear him, though each of them looks like it could tear Darque apart). Darque opens the casing of the computer CPU tower. Inside is the

disembodied head of a dead programmer, which is serving as the CPU. Wires and cables poke into his head. Cables into his head that run through cracks in the casing Darque just removed are now stretched painfully tight. A few wires run into his head through his mouth-making it difficult for him to talk. He's suffering bigtime.

This is the dead programmer who calculated the spell for Darque's failed Hegemony of Death. Darque needs power and asks for suggestions. The "head" programmer-let's call him that: The Head Programmer-is pissed at Darque because he was supposed to be rewarded for his work on the spell. Darque says it failed, so forget it. Now give me answers or I'll improperly shut you down and restart you. (Noooo! Not the ScanDisk!)

PAGE SEVEN: The Head Programmer grudgingly tells Darque some info. As he does, we see that someone, a mysterious, threatening-looking figure (Shadow Man) is watching Darque and the Head Programmer from the shadows.

The Head Programmer gives Darque half of what he needs and starts making demands. Darque goes to the keyboard and simply calls up the withheld info on the screen. In a close up of the screen we see an image showing Solar's quantum "dominoes" alignment of the multiverse. Vast power will be generated, says the Head Programmer. If you could usurp that power somehow, you could institute your Hegemony of Death by brute force

A sound makes Darque turn-Shadow Man is behind him, five or ten feet away. He wants to know what this intrusion into his turf is about. What's on the screen? As Darque explains that he's just sending some e-mail to Hell, he surreptitiously yanks a cable and the computer crashes with an explosion of sparks like the bridge computers always did in that old Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea TV series. The Head Programmer screams. Darque tells Shadow Man about Solar's quest-he's telling the truth again, though it pains him. He asks Shadow Man to help. Nettie (NOTE TO OMAR: or Jaunty?) appears and confirms enough of what Darque said to convince Shadow Man. He and Darque walk toward the Deadside Gate uncomfortably together-leaving the smoldering PC and the Head Programmer, who's still screaming, behind.

PAGES EIGHT AND NINE: Cut to beyond reality, where the creature, who, though severely injured is mounting a last ditch attack. Solar and Pierce are driven back. Solar is in danger-it looks like the creature is about to destroy him! Suddenly, Pierce, risking her existence, saves Solar!

Together, Solar and Pierce kill the creature-spectacularly-and rip open its corpse. Gayle is in some mystic containment, literally in the belly of the beast. She looks comatose-then when Solar approaches, reanimates. Pierce notices that there's something wrong-she senses that Gayle's dead. She says something (a clue to the readers) but Solar's oblivious, clearly in complete denial. Pierce has the smarts to shut up. (NOTE TO JIM: From this point on, no more earthquakes back in reality.)

Now what? says Pierce. Solar says they must eliminate potential interference-then set off the chain reaction. Pierce says that Solar should have let her do that with the first UNITY. Solar says that she wanted to wipe it ALL away, become God and start over. He's just separating the wheat from the chaff.

PAGE TEN: Cut to Darque's mansion. Darque looks up from a scrying pool with a hint of fear and awe on his usually blasé face. They're coming, he says. Pull back to reveal Anansi, Grigori and several others, major Prime Universe characters, looking on anxiously. Prominent among

those present are Sting and Lucy, arms around one another. Time for the last stand says Darque.

Moments later, a veritable army of super characters is surrounding Darque, ready to defend him. They fill the (large) room, spill out into the hallways and even onto the grounds. They are the Prime Universe characters, the VALIANT Universe characters, endless iterations of same from parallel realities, and, again, with Omar's consent, a few ringers from other comics, discreetly shown. They're ready.

PAGE ELEVEN: Suddenly, there is an enormous flash of energy.

When the flash fades, the mansion is gone-reduced to quarks. Only a few bits and pieces, i.e., small chunks of the foundation sticking up, gushing water pipes, the occasional shard of furniture, etc., remain. Every single defender is on the ground-some unconscious, some dazed, all basically helpless. Make sure to show Sting and Lucy among the fallen-neither unconscious, but hurt. Darque stands in the midst of this, shocked, afraid. Sandria, standing beside Darque, is also unhurt-and terrified.

Solar, Gayle and Pierce appear. Solar tells Gayle to stay right by his side. He'll protect her. Solar, one arm around Gayle and sort of shielding her, confronts Darque, warning him not to try anything. Pierce says, "I'll handle this," and, in one motion, pushes past Solar and belts Darque, sending him sprawling back.

PAGE TWELVE: She pounds him viciously, really enjoying it. She's sick. Put some energy crackles around her fists or otherwise suggest that this is a super-beating, not just ordinary punching. Sandria thinks this is great and eggs her on. Solar pulls her off of him. Enough, already. Right, she says-okay, you do the multiverse collapse-thing, I'll keep an eye on these guys/watch your back.

Solar opens a window into unreality. Through this window we can see the "domino" arrangement he has set up. Just outside the window, he creates a pinpoint black hole, which hovers in the air near the window. Dramatically, Solar reaches into unreality through the window, and with a flick of a finger, starts the chain reaction.

APPROPRIATELY, PAGE THIRTEEN: Cut to the multiverse collapsing.

The Armageddon Clock appears. It is midnight.

As the realities from which the various characters hail from collapse, the characters vanish! Those conscious enough to grasp what's going on react with shock and dismay.

(NOTE: From this point on till the end of the collapsing realities bit, try to work in occasional glimpses of the process going on-especially at the end, show the last two or three realities vanishing, leaving finally, only Darque's.)

PAGE FOURTEEN: Meanwhile, the energy released by the chain reaction is flowing out of the window and into the black hole-you've seen those pictures of black holes siphoning energy from stars, right? Like that. The black hole is starting to glow, enlarge a bit, and look like it contains the energy of many universes.

Solar is governing this process, seemingly oblivious to the fact that Morningstar appears behind

him, next to Pierce. Pierce pulls out the squirt gun, which she has had concealed somewhere—either mystically, or just shoved down the front of her pants. Morningstar fills it with the ink. Do it, he says.

Pierce fires the squirt gun at Solar, who spasms in agony.

PAGE FIFTEEN: Solar, in a burst of energy dissipates into quarks. (FYI, anticipating treachery, he invisibly energy-shielded himself.) The ink that struck him (or appeared to strike him) lies in a small puddle on the ground.

Gayle reacts with fear and shock to Solar's disappearance, but otherwise, she's unaffected by Solar's "death," i.e., she's as normal and animated as usual when Solar's around. A clue...

Pierce is thrilled. She races to the window and makes an adjustment to the domino pattern. (She's the one who told Solar how to do it in the first place.) Now all realities will vanish. She'll survive, of course, and using the energy in the black hole, rebuild to suit her. What about me, asks Morningstar. I don't want anything left, says Pierce. I wonder if this ink works on you, too. She squirts him. No effect, except that he gets ink splattered on his face. Hey, says Pierce...this gun LEAKS! The ink leaking on her hand starts eating her away, and she agonizingly melts away like the wicked witch in the Wizard of Oz. (NOTE TO JIM: This should look distinctively different than when Solar vanished, another clue to the fact that he faked dying.) Morningstar chuckles.

While the above is going on, show somehow—perhaps by intercutting—the ink that "killed" Solar is rising off the ground where it puddled. It forms into a shape that suggests it's now resting in a small, invisible (energy) bowl.

PAGE SIXTEEN: Morningstar starts toward the black hole, to claim the energy. Sandria's thrilled, rushing over to embrace him—it'll be just the two of them, right? Morningstar swats her away. Ha! Be with you? Ha!

As Morningstar reaches for the black hole, to seize the power, Solar dramatically appears in front of him, blocking his path. (He'd made himself transparent to all radiation, and therefore invisible, so he could surreptitiously see exactly what evil was afoot.) He holds the energy-bowl of ink in his hand. You can't stop me, says Morningstar. He becomes his Satan self. They're about to fight.

Suddenly, Lucy screams "Daddy!" Satan/Morningstar turns to see her striding toward him, angry. Sting is with her—she's helping him along because he isn't quite as well recovered as she, his injuries being more severe.

Lucy demands that he cut it out right now! And she pleads with Solar to stop the process, pointing to the characters/realities vanishing by the score. Go away, darling daughter, growls Satan/Morningstar. This is my ticket out of prison—and to preeminence in the cosmos. Don't worry, I'll take care of your concerns—restoring your new boyfriend, in particular—once all of the energy in the multiverse is mine, and I am the new Big Boss, Number One.

PAGE SEVENTEEN: Lucy isn't cowed at all. She grabs him by a pointed ear and growls back at him. Maybe she isn't Michael, but she is an angel and she'll kick his ass if he doesn't cut it out! At minimum, he'll have to irretrievably destroy her, his own daughter, if he persists.

Morningstar whines and pleads with Lucy, but she's adamant. Still holding his ear, she reads him the riot act.

Darque limps up to Solar. He begs Solar to listen to him. No tricks. Just the truth. Make it quick, Solar says. He has to readjust the dominoes to save his reality.

Darque turns to Gayle. She's dead, you know, he says. Actually, I find that quite attractive in a woman. Trust me on this, I'm a Necromancer.

Solar angrily denies it.

Shadow Man, having pulled himself together, limps up and confirms it-and of course, on some level, Solar already knows it.

PAGE EIGHTEEN: Solar is devastated. The multiverse is rushing toward ultimate oblivion. Darque, who's bleeding profusely, uses the measuring cup to catch some of his own blood running from a gash in his arm or wrist, which then he pours out, forming a scrying puddle. He shows Solar the Phil and Gayle he visited before, happy, well and living the life he, Solar dreamed of. Let their world-my world, says Darque, by the way, continue.

More characters vanish. The collapse is rushing to completion.

Solar reaches into the window and makes an adjustment.

Solar touches his beloved Gayle's cheek one last time. Then, he raises the cup of ink-and drinks it.

Solar melts away like the witch in the Wizard of Oz-ultimately dissipating entirely. As he does, Gayle collapses. Her limp body is caught by Shadow Man. He says something oblique that suggests that she's gone to the "good" place, and he hopes Solar joins her there.

(NOTE TO OMAR: I SUGGEST THAT YOU MAKE IT THE LAW THAT WE NEVER SEE THESE CHARACTERS AGAIN. DON'T LET ANY WRITER HAVE THEM TURNING UP IN DEADSIDE, OR APPEARING AS GHOSTS, OR ANYTHING-OR IT'LL REAWAKEN ALL OF WHAT WE'VE SPENT SIX ISSUES GETTING RID OF. FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, MAN, LET THEM REST IN PEACE.)

PAGE NINETEEN: Then, all the VALIANT Universe characters vanish...

...including Gayle's body...

...and Sting.

Lucy, who by now has turned Satan/Morningstar loose-he's sitting, sulking-screams as her star-crossed lover vanishes.

PAGE TWENTY: Suddenly, with a tremendous, thunderous shockwave that shakes the remaining Prime Reality, it ends.

PAGE TWENTY-ONE: Only the Prime Universe characters-all of whom are recovering by now.

Darque makes a dive for the black hole, still hovering, very full of energy-enough for Darque to rule the universe with.

Shadow Man was ready for that and blasts Darque's outstretched hand into red mist with his Desert Eagle.

The power-filled black hole vanishes. It's gone back to The One Who Is All.

Darque is writhing. Shadow Man tells everyone to go home.

Lucy, still verklempt over the loss of Sting, tells Morningstar, who's his human self again, to make these people forget all this. It's a bit much for mortal minds. He does.

(NOTE TO OMAR: ANOTHER SUGGESTED LAW-LET NO ONE EVER MENTION THE EVENTS OF THIS STORY AGAIN. LET IT BE GONE AND FORGOTTEN.)

PAGE TWENTY-TWO: Morningstar and Darque talk. They commiserate. No hard feelings. They actually admire each other's evil. Darque would shake Morningstar's hand, but his seems to be missing. Oh, well, he'll heal, being immortal and all.

Where's Sandria, Darque wonders. Oh, says Morningstar. I made her a promise that I thoroughly intended to renege on, but thanks to my holier-than-moi daughter...I'm afraid it's been kept.

Darque and Morningstar part.

Cut to Morningstar arriving home. Angel baby Muriel greets Morningstar at the door and says something about her "new mommy." Then, Sandria, wearing frumpy housewife clothes and a wicked, smug, satisfied smile comes to greet Morningstar.

Last panel: Darque, in a hotel somewhere, ponders new evil...

The End

