

SEVENTH SON

ISSUE TWO

JASON TONDRO

PAGE 1

1- All right. The structure of this story is pretty simple. Page one sets up a scene that will pay off in about three issues. Pages 2-7 set up the end of this issue. Pages 8-21 tell the story of Noah's first encounter with a supervillain, the mysterious Margrave. Page 22 pays off the subplot and leads right into next issue. To begin, we have an establishing shot of the exterior of the Dyson home, which is the house of a large family with less than unlimited means. It's pretty whitebread and suburbia, the sort of place with a freshly mowed lawn out front and maybe an oak tree near the sidewalk. It is morning, though this may not be clear until panel 3 when it is explicitly verbalized. There's a large front window that allows a view of the kitchen, and through it we can see a blonde figure. This is DAVID DYSON, Noah's father, the second person to bear the name of SEVENTH SON. He's reading the paper and eating breakfast, and though the distance of this shot may leave him as little more than an indistinct form, it's worth saying now that he is physically very impressive -- a build you might see on Marvel's Thor, but with a conservative haircut.

CAPTION

1992

2- On David, who is sitting at a kitchen counter with the window behind him and the neighborhood visible beyond. (Effectively, we're 180 degrees from where we were last panel, looking back out the window from the inside of the house instead of outside looking in.) He's got a slice of brown toast in one hand, a newspaper in the other. A steaming cup of coffee sits on the counter. His narrow gaze and stony expression make it clear he's a morning person out of necessity, not by choice.

3- NOAH shambles into the kitchen, heading for the refrigerator. This shot is from the point of view of David, were he looking into the kitchen, which he's not. Noah is David's seventh son and our protagonist. At the time of this story he is twelve years old. Noah is an imaginative and likeable kid who comes off as a proud geek. If Bill Patterson's Calvin grew up, lost his talking tiger, and left the Sunday funnies for a Mark Bagley comic, he'd look like Noah. This early in the morning, his shirt is untucked and his straw-blond hair is sticking up in all directions. He rubs his eye and mutters.

NOAH
Morning, Dad.

4- On the grouping of two figures, David and Noah. We're looking from the POV of the window, with David in the foreground and Noah in the middle ground. The son has come closer to his father, who continues to eat and read the paper studiously ignoring the world until he has had his hot caffeine. His son is curious, his body language suggesting peeking over a high wall even though there's nothing between him and his father besides silence.

NOAH
Are you eating DRY TOAST?

DAVID
Yep.

5- On Noah, who is hesitant to correct his father. He may be gesturing expressively towards the fridge, even though David isn't swerving from his paper and the gesture is lost. Otherwise, this shot is much the same as panel 4. David hasn't moved.

NOAH
Um. Do you want some butter?

6- On David, in the foreground, who picks up his coffee mug. Noah remains in the middle ground but behind him. Perhaps only visible from the neck or shoulders down, his mother CLAIRE enters the kitchen in the same way Noah did, in the background. While this sort of detail probably isn't visible in this panel, Claire is a naturally beautiful brunette in her late thirties. She's raised seven kids, all of whom turned out to be superheroes, so there's not much that surprises or rattles her. Her own aspirations and desires have had to suffer for this family, but she also loves them all dearly, and this is her dilemma. David's reply to his son is completely poker-faced.

DAVID
Real superheroes don't put butter
on their bread.

7- Closer on Noah, though the real action belongs to Claire as she comes up behind her son and smooths his hair. Again, she may be visible only from the neck down as her palms touch his head. It's waist up or maybe even mid-thighs for Noah, but his father has thankfully dropped down out of the front of the panel.

CLAIRE

Come on honey, you know how your father is before he's had his coffee.

Now get cleaned up. Your brothers will be here soon.

PAGE 2

1- Insert. The front door of the Dyson home, from the inside. Noah's voice is coming from off panel.

SFX

ding dong

NOAH

GOT IT!

2- Insert. Noah is happy and excited, framed by the now-open doorway, looking out. He's dressed now, in jeans and a boldly colored t-shirt which makes his thin arms look even more scrawny. His hair is merely unkempt rather than bed-ravished.

NOAH

James! Andrew! What took you guys so long!

3- Splash. JAMES DYSON is Noah's eldest brother, ANDREW is the youngest (save for Noah himself). James is about 25, in the prime of his youthful vigor, tall, broad-shouldered, golden haired and handsome. He wears glasses and his hair is brushed back away from his face. His tie is striped blue and gold. He's smiling, amused by Noah's youthful excitement, but he is essentially a conservative man and not prone to demonstration. A modern Clark Kent analogy would not be misplaced with James; he has none of the good-natured buffoonery of the early Clark, but much of the "safe contemporary" spin that has been given to the character since the 90s. Andrew, age 18, is much different: skinny, dark of complexion, dressed in eclectic second-hand clothes, he is artistic and creative with an ego which is whimsical without being overbearing. Good-natured, he is also smiling, hands in his pockets.

JAMES

We heard you were on RESTRICTION. No powers for TWO WEEKS.

ANDREW

Last pair of glasses YOU'LL ever lose.

PAGE 3

1- On Noah, who first replies to his brother and then shouts back inside. It's this latter movement that we capture, with Noah leaning aggressively towards the open door. His first word balloon is on the opposite side of his head, to the left. Andy leans against the side of the house, grinning down at his over-energetic little brother.

NOAH
Don't I KNOW it!

MOMMM! They're HEEERE! I'm GOOOING!

2- But Noah cannot escape that fast. Clair has emerged from the house and embraces James on the porch.

JAMES
Mom. You look great.

CLAIRE
It's good to see you too, honey.
Now go on, we can catch up later.
He's been IMPOSSIBLE.

3- On James and Andrew, who are walking away from the house in the background, towards a car which is in the driveway though not necessarily visible in this panel. Andrew grins, James fishes for his keys. Noah trails behind, waving behind to Mom, who may be off panel.

ANDREW
Impossible Boy?

JAMES
Impossible Lad?

4- On James's boring brown sedan, which we see from the rear. James is on the left, the driver's side, with Andy waiting by the open passenger door. Extreme right, Noah's arms are raised in triumph and he's a bit higher than he usually is, due to the fact that he's bouncing.

JAMES
Noah, you're in the front seat.

NOAH
Awright!

5- Same as 4, but Noah has deflated like a pricked balloon.

JAMES
In the middle.

NOAH
Shoot.

PAGE 4

1- On the sedan as it glides through suburbia. A word balloon comes out of the driver's side.

JAMES
Seatbelts.

2- On Noah, who is facing right with his brothers and is sandwiched between them. Noah looks expectantly at James, who is focused on the road. Andrew is perpetually amused, and is probably only partially visible.

NOAH
Well?

3- On James, torso and head as he drives. He smiles, knowingly, at what Noah is fishing for.

JAMES
Well what?

4- On Andrew, lanky arms crossed. He also knows.

ANDREW
Mom didn't tell you?

5- On Noah, who waves his arms about in exasperation.

NOAH
They haven't told me ANYTHING!

They were all, 'Wait till your
brothers get here.'

6- On Noah, who waits expectantly, if not patiently, for the answer to his obvious question. He is flanked by his brothers, who maintain silence for one last moment, perhaps pretending to not know what in the world Noah is talking about. Andrew watches Noah, James watches the road.

7- On the three brothers, as Andrew relents and tells Noah what he wants to know. Again, Andy is on the far left, James on the right, with Noah bouncing excitedly between them in the car seat. All face right.

With his left hand, Andy gestures over Noah's head to James, and this brings our eye to Andy's word balloons. With his right hand, which would be against the door, he puts fingers to his own chest.

ANDREW

Atlas

Koan the Unknowable

NOAH

This is SO AWESOME!

8- On James. A couple ways to do this depending on which you think works best. Noah talks first, then James, so it might be a shot from outside and above James's car window. Facing left. This leaves Noah looking up at James in the back of the shot. Again, James grins but keeps his eyes on the road. This shifts the direction of car travel from right to left, however, potentially jarring our reader. The other way to go might be a relatively frontal shot, over the dash, with Noah on the left and James on the right.

NOAH

Hey! I see you in the news ALL THE TIME!

JAMES

Mm. I hear I may get a vacation in a few years.

PAGE 5

1- On Andrew, who is momentarily confused as Noah turns his relentless curiosity towards him. Noah, to the right, is completely innocent to the possible insult involved in not recognizing your own brother's superheroic identity. This sort of foot-in-mouth comment is very typical for our young hero.

NOAH

Who are you again?

2- Close on James, who grins more broadly.

JAMES

Sorry, Andrew.

3- On Andrew, who makes a conciliatory gesture with both hands out, an amiable expression on his face. He's talking to both brothers, though James probably isn't visible off to the right. Noah watches with wide eyes, confident that his brother will reveal heroic deeds in the Mighty Marvel Manner.

ANDREW
TOTALLY used to it.

KOAN. The UNKNOWABLE. I fought THE
MOURNER last month?

4- Close on Noah, who ponders thoughtfully, sifting through his memory.

NOAH
Nope. Never heard of you.

5- On Noah, who has switched instantly back to jubilant. Andrew, nonplussed, talks over the boy's head to James, off camera to the right.

NOAH
But you're still a superhero, so
you must be COOL.

ANDREW
Head for the 14th street bridge,
Jimmy. My EGO needs FLUFFING.

6- Close on James, who gives a sour grimace. Cheap prostitutes isn't a fit subject of discussion in front of kids.

JAMES
That's DISGUSTING.

PAGE 6

1- Across the top of the page is a single narrow panel which depicts the relatively small sedan as it drives through town surrounded by a barrage of word balloons. With the car moving from left to right, Noah's word balloon can come out of the middle of the car, while James's reply can come out of the left-hand driver's side, both balloons spawning others which link around the car if necessary.

NOAH
Stephen?

JAMES
The Silver Shield.

NOAH
Is he as strong as you?

JAMES
Not quite.

NOAH
Can he fly faster?

JAMES
Almost.

NOAH
Bounce bullets?

JAMES
Only my BONES bounce bullets, Noah.
If I get shot, I bleed.

NOAH
Oh, so HE can bounce bullets.

JAMES
Well ...

2- On Noah, who is outraged as he speaks aggressively up to James, who is off panel to the right. We're inside the car and don't need to see anyone but Noah.

NOAH
So we have all YOUR powers except
NOT as GOOD?

That SUCKS!

3- On Andrew, who reclines to the left against the passenger door and, with open arms, tries to explain things.

ANDREW
Noah, we're not like a XEROX
MACHINE, decreasing in QUALITY
with every RUN-OFF.

There's just a PREDELICTION for
certain traits that Dad and GRANDPA
possess.

For most of us, it's a lottery.

But not for you.

4- On Noah, who is now curious, his sense of moral unfairness transformed into an effort to puzzle out a mystery.

NOAH
Why not?

5- Closer on Andrew, who gestures to Noah with a single open palm. A sort of ta-da motion.

ANDREW

Because in this lottery, there's
one number that always wins.

6- On Noah, thoughtful. He's taking this in. Are they saying he's going to be more powerful than all of his brothers? He's going to be as tough as Dad?

PAGE 7

NINE PANEL GRID

1- On James as Noah looks up to him. Again, the choice is up to you. We could be looking from outside the driver window, putting James foreground and facing left, Noah slightly higher and back, or we could have a front shot with Noah on the left, James on the right. Whichever, it should be the same pick as we faced on previous pages. Noah's rambunctious question time is over. Now come the serious issues. The things Noah really wants to know, even if he isn't entirely sure how to ask.

NOAH

So what now?

2- Close on James as we're back inside the car, from slightly lower and to James's right ... in other words, we've got Noah's POV. James is behind the wheel. His eyes remain fixed on the road, his expression patient.

JAMES

Now you start to learn how to use
your abilities.

The same way we all did.

3- Same as 2, but now James is looking at Noah/us out of the corner of his eyes. There's a hesitancy in him; he wants to see how Noah is going to take this idea. This is the first time James has taken his eyes off the road since the car ride began.

JAMES

As a SIDEKICK.

4- On Noah, who frowns, arms crossed. Sidekicks suck. This is from James's POV.

5- Same as 4, but now Noah is looking up at James/us in hostility.

NOAH

To who?

6- Andrew comes to James's rescue; our focus is on the two figures of Andy and Noah. Andy is conciliatory, one arm along the top of the car seat so he seems to be embracing his little brother, who is a bit less pouty than before but still nowhere near pleased with the situation.

ANDREW

That ... is up to YOU.

NOAH

Oh.

7- On Noah, between his two brothers. We may see only Andrew's back, or a sliver of him, as he hugs the left side of the panel. Noah is talking towards us, to Andrew, skepticism visible in the sideways angle of his head, the narrowness of his gaze. James drives with one hand on the wheel, speaking in reply to Noah's concern.

NOAH

Is it REALLY? Cause I've heard that BEFORE.

JAMES

No, he's RIGHT. It really IS.

8- On Noah, who is back talking to James. Noah has moved on from the humiliation of sidekicking now, and is moving on to find ways of making it as least un-cool as possible. In fact, it may even be neat if it gives him a chance to hang out with certain people.

NOAH

How about DAD?

JAMES

Dad's retired. But some of your uncles are still in action. I'd be honored ...

9- The three brothers are facing right as the windshield of the car shatters inwards and the front of the car crumples. Bits of glass dot the air as James winces, still looking straight into the crash. Andrew raises an arm before his face, half looking away, while Noah is the most shocked, recoiling and raising both arms. Color can break this panel out of the rest of the page; maybe just black for definition, white for the glass fragments, deep red over everything?

PAGE 8

1- Wide shot of the street, elevated and looking down on an oncoming compact -- clearly out of its lane -- which has been struck by James' sedan. The two cars have rebounded enough that there is space between them to walk. Neither is totaled, though the compact has taken the worse of it and is no longer drivable. A blonde female may be visible in the front seat, her hair covering her downcast face. No blood. James is getting out of his side of the car, along the bottom of the panel. Voices come from inside the same car, Andy's higher and Noah's lower, though neither person is actually visible thanks to the car roof.

ANDY

Are you all right?

NOAH

i think so

2- Second tier begins. On James, who has hustled quickly around to the driver's side of the crumpled compact. The door is open, and a blonde in a white t-shirt, jeans, and flip-flops is extricating herself. This is ISOBEL SHANDY, our damsel in distress, and she looks confused. James's body and face are tense, accusatory. His suit jacket is unbuttoned, tie askew, his brushed-back hair a bit out of place.

JAMES

Dammit, Miss. You could have killed someone.

ISOBEL

shit shit shit

3- On James, who has seized Isobel by the bicep, as if to shake some sense into her. He's furious; this display of anger breaks that classical Clark Kent mold he has been depicted in. The perfect superhero wouldn't be roughly handling a woman, regardless of circumstances. James isn't as perfect as he tries to be and sometimes loses control of his emotions. Isobel is in motion, shaken by James's grip and unsteady on her feet, a combination of the trauma of the crash and the fact that she's too panicked to think straight. While she's not, in fact, drunk James can perhaps be excused for thinking her so.

JAMES

What is wrong with you?

Are you drunk ...

ISOBEL

Oh god I'm sorry

4- On Isobel, panicked, as she struggles to escape from James's hold and also to warn him at the same time. He is less emotional now; something has occurred to him and it's caused his emotional outburst to be put on indefinite hold. While he's still holding her by the bicep, it's only his supernaturally strong grip that keeps her from fleeing. He's holding her in an absent-minded way, as if he has forgotten he is doing so.

JAMES

You look familiar.

ISOBEL

Don't touch me, just run!

5- Third tier begins. On Andrew, who approaches with a smile on his face. He and Noah are out of the car by now, though Noah is probably off panel. Andrew is completely casual, a people-person, and at the moment much more reasonable than his elder brother. A wind has started in this panel, building across the panels on the bottom of the page. The wind is blowing from back down the street, from the direction James was driving, and towards the direction Isobel came from. Isobel and James's struggle is partially visible, with James still looking distracted and Isobel noticing Andrew's approach, her escape attempt being reduced to a steady pull away from James, a pull which isn't working.

ANDREW

Hey, it's OK. We're insured. I'm Andrew. This is James.

And you are ...

6- On Isobel, who has suddenly come loose from James. There is a look of recognition on James's face and his grip has suddenly opened. Isobel has lurched in the opposite direction, like you do when you are pulling on a rope that someone suddenly lets go of. At the same time, she's shouting a warning to Andy, who is off camera. The wind is more obvious, with Isobel's hair tangling in her ears and lips. James's tie is flapping, his hair blowing about.

ISOBEL

Forget about the DAMN CAR, will you? Just RUN for your GOD DAMN LIVES!

JAMES

Wait. You're ISOBEL SHANDY.

7- On James, who is now the one ignoring Isobel while she stares at him in confused surprise. Our view is from the other side of the sedan, where Noah might be, were he visible. James is shouting towards us/Noah, his expression determined, heroic, preparing for battle. The wind plasters every loose article of clothing against the wearer's body, moves hair horizontal.

ISOBEL

Huh? Do ... Do I know you?

JAMES

Noah, RUN!

PAGE 9

1- Inset. On James and, behind him, Andy, looking towards the camera and away from the wind (that is, towards the direction the wind is blowing, where Isobel came from). Andy is curious and afraid, James knowing, determined, and afraid.

ANDREW

What is it? What's happening?

JAMES

It's the MARGRAVE.

2- Splash. The MARGRAVE is walking through the air, through a wrecked street. The Margrave was once an ordinary Irish pub tender and amateur literary enthusiast named Tristan Shandy, whose body became a vessel which contains an entire alternate dimension. The only way he could survive mentally was to retreat entirely into his subconscious. The resulting form, the Margrave, is composed of Tristan's subconscious and acts on his subconscious urges and needs. Needs which we will see work themselves out in the pages that follow. For perspective it is important to note that he is 12 feet tall; twice as high as an ordinary person. He wears exaggerated components of knightly armor: wide shoulder plates, a helmet (this is a tough one, as it should not look Galactus-silly; perhaps something from late middle ages armor styles?), metal gauntlets and leg guards (perhaps vaguely reminiscent of those suits of armor we see in Kingdom Come; I'm thinking especially of Alan Scott's Green Knight armor). A voluminous cape drapes backwards from under the shoulder gear. But these accouterments do not include a breastplate: his torso at least is not covered in armor. There, we can see the alternate universe that is contained inside the Margrave: within that blackness are many stars, burning suns, and planets. He walks in the air, above the cars in the street, his cloak drifting slightly behind him.

The armor is white or silver, but green, red, and blue are in his form and emanating from him in brilliant light. He looks something like a combination of Marvel's Eternity and some sort of knight. He is the source of the wind we have seen earlier; the vacuum of space at his heart sucks everything towards it, including the air itself. But his cape defies this wind so that he can look more impressive.

PAGE 10

1- Most of the page. (Two thirds?) On James, forefront, who is pulling open his shirt in a classic Clark Kent moment, revealing a globe symbol instead of the traditional S. His glasses are gone. His hair is settling into a different style than he wears in his civilian identity. Andrew is behind him and, though we cannot see his feet, he is in fact floating a couple of feet off the ground as he peers over his brother's shoulder. He sees the Margrave coming (off panel) and he's trying to think of alternatives. James in particular is full-body visible, while the two brothers carry on a conversation.

ANDREW

Call the Invincibles.

JAMES

They've been disbanded.

ANDREW

The Seven Thunders.

JAMES

Trapped in SYNCHRONI CITY.

ANDREW

Sigma Chi Iota?

JAMES

It's Spring Break.

ANDREW

You mean ...

JAMES

It's all on OUR SHOULDERS.

2- On ATLAS, as James is now known, who faces the oncoming (and off panel) Margrave while Andy transforms into Koan. Andrew has floated a bit up into the air and adopted a lotus position, his body filled with a light show to such an extent that no details of his physical form are visible -- he is just an outline around special effects, which may also emanate a short distance from his body.

If possible, Isobel is also visible, watching the sudden arrival of the two heroes. Her mood had shifted from blind panic to mere over-riding fear. Again, the wind is blowing in the same direction as their faces ... towards the coming Margrave.

ATLAS

Get Miss Shandy to safety. It's her he's after.

ANDREW

Got it.

3- On Atlas, who launches himself into the air to the right, fast as a fighter jet. Andy has now transformed into KOAN THE UNKNOWABLE, a mystic/martial artist hero with a costume that blends elements of Doctor Strange with Hong Kong Action Theater. No mask, no cape. Sash around the waist, billowy sleeves, tight leggings. He leads Isobel off to the left.

PAGE 11

1- On Atlas as he rockets past the Margrave at a speed near the sound barrier, slugging him in the head as he flies by. James' entire body is focused, disciplined, and more than a little angry. Margrave's facial reaction is hard to read because of the obscuring helmet, but his upper body spins with the blow, conveying the enormous force with which it was struck. It's important the blow hit Margrave in the head, as his torso is a hole to another universe and if Atlas hits it he will pass within. Also, this may be the first place to really convey the Margrave's size, with he and Atlas in the same panel.

2- On Atlas, who has snatched the Margrave's cape in both hands as Atlas moves past, pulling it tight and yanking the Margrave backwards, off his feet. Atlas's objective is to keep the Margrave off balance and, for this panel at least, it's working.

3- Optional. Close on Atlas, head or head and shoulders, as he pours on the speed. G-forces work on his face.

4- On Margrave. Atlas has just released him while flying at high velocity, dragging the Margrave into a telephone pole which is deformed with the impact.

SFX

WHRANG

5- On Margrave, who has gotten to one knee. Atlas is getting a grip on a pick-up in the background.

The Margrave's speech font should be larger and bolder, to reflect the increased volume and deeper tone. (Possibly something ornate or mock-archaic. If it is hard to read, that would not necessarily be bad, as it would fit his overall source material.)

MARGREVE

My argumance neconcerns you.

6- On Atlas, who hefts the pick-up over his head. He's snarling with stubborn anger, the shadow of the truck darkening his features.

ATLAS

You're wasting your time. I remember PHOENIX PARK.

PAGE 12

1- On the pick-up truck, which has already been thrown and which is now colliding with the brick front of a downtown bookstore called DAEDALUS BOOKS. Since we'll be seeing different angles on this store throughout this page, I'll describe it here. Daedalus Books is one of those cozy little niche bookstores that flourishes in a creative and artistic neighborhood. It's been family owned for two generations. A front part of the store has some open space broken up by display tables packed with the latest titles, while the middle and back of the store are home to tall bookshelves which make a maze for customers to get lost in. There are probably less than a dozen people in here at the moment.

2- On Margrave's upper body. He is inside the bookstore pinned underneath the truck, which may be upside down or on its side. Rubble surrounds him, but one arm remains free. Bookshelves against the front wall have toppled over and front tables have been splintered and toppled over by the impact of truck and villain. The few people we see inside are fleeing for their lives towards the rear of the store. Again, a wind is always blowing into the Margrave.

MARGRAVE

SWORD

3- On Atlas, who stands at the hole in the wall, bracing himself against the broken bricks as the wind blows into the ruined store. The wind (which is even greater than before) sucks his own cape around him and into the store. A visual effect comes out of the hole as well, a swirling light show that casts red, green, and blue over Atlas and the bricks around him. This is due to the fact that, off panel, the Margrave has summoned his sword, which is yet another hole to another dimension.

He's making the truck on top of him vanish by the simple expedient of touching it with his sword. He'll do the same trick to Atlas in a moment, but this time it's done off panel. To help convey this display of power by the Margrave, Atlas may be wincing against the bright display of light, half-looking away or holding a hand up to shield him against the light.

4- On Margrave, who stands tall and alone in the ruined store, the truck nowhere to be seen. He holds an enormous sword in one hand. Its blade is the same cosmological matter that makes up his own torso: stars and planets can be seen in that blackness, which does not look like metal. The handle and hilt are similar in visual style to his own armor pieces. We're looking from an elevated position, as if up in the corner of the store ceiling. Atlas stands in the hole in the wall, looking in.

MARGRAVE

Be not my Hercules, Rand Man. Your torso sports a world, but mine a MULTIVERSE constrains.

Let me roll this burden off.

5- On Atlas, head and shoulders shot. Grim. Now that the fight has moved to close quarters, Atlas has lost the advantage his flight and speed granted him. Nonetheless, he is determined.

ATLAS

Never going to happen, Shandy.

PAGE 13

1- On Margrave and Atlas, as the former impales the latter on his sword. The blade has gone clear through Atlas's body, but there is no blood. The sword is sending Atlas to another dimension, so what we see is a sphere of light and power centered on the place where the blade and Atlas's chest intersect. Atlas has been caught flat-footed and his body has contorted from his efforts to twist aside from the blow. His mouth is open but there is no scream. The same red-yellow-blue light effect surrounds him that we saw coming in from off panel last page when the sword was drawn ... and the Margrave did the same thing to the pick-up truck.

MARGRAVE

Then I condemn you to where YOUR QUARKS ARE NOT YOUR OWN!

2- On Margrave, who is alone in the ruined store. Atlas is gone. The villain has won.

The sword may still have a residual effect of some sort surrounding it ... lights, or smoking gun effect, perhaps.

3- On Margrave as he emerges from the hole in the side of Daedalus Books, holding the sword in his left hand (our right). He is looking to our left, where his word balloon is located, while a shadow or glimpse of Koan's foot can be seen hovering above and to the right, so Koan's own word balloon can be in lower right. He arrived a moment too late to help his brother, and is hiding out of sight above the hole in the wall in order to ambush the villain.

MARGRAVE

Now where is my Iseult?

KOAN

I've got a question for you ...

4- On Koan who, after hiding above the hole in the wall waiting for Margrave to emerge, has leapt down with the whole weight of his body on the back of Margrave's neck. The giant staggers forward, his head jerked back. Left hand still holds the immense sword.

KOAN

What's the sound of one hand
KICKING YOUR ASS!

MARGRAVE

Guh

PAGE 14

1- On Koan, who has dropped down in front of the staggering Margrave, who has begun to regain his balance. The fact is that, throughout the fight to come, Koan simply cannot hurt Margrave -- the enemy is too tough for Koan's human-level strength. But Koan makes initial progress by unbalancing his foe and avoiding him. In this panel, as Margrave starts to recover from the kick to the back of the neck, Koan gets two hands on the ornate armor around the Margrave's waist.

2- On Koan, dwarfed by the much larger Margrave.. Feet firmly planted wide apart, swiveling his body at the waist, Koan throws the unbalanced Margrave to the ground.

3- On Margrave, as he gets his right hand underneath him to stand. Koan delivers a blow to the head. This punch has Koan's entire body behind it: all the force and focus he can possibly muster.

KOAN

KYAH!

SFX

CLANG

4- Margrave is half-prone, getting to his feet. Koan targets the villain's left elbow with a kick, an attempt to get Margrave to drop his sword. It doesn't work. At the same time, Koan is setting up his next move: his hands hold Margrave's cloak.

SFX

thud

PAGE 15

1- On Margrave, as Koan leaps up and over him from the front, holding the Margrave's cloak in his hands. When the move is complete next panel this will pull the cape taut, so it leads from the back of the Margrave's collar, down under his left arm, then across the Margrave's chest and up over his right shoulder -- effectively pinning the sword arm up in the air against the Margrave's head. But here, the move is still in development, with Koan leaping over the Margrave's right shoulder, the cape still looping through the air, not quite tight.

2- On Koan, whose whole body is in motion. Landing on his hands behind the Margrave (the end of the cloak is under his hands, against the ground), he does a legsweep on his enemy with the entire lower half of his body. The Margrave is still trying to stand, and the tightened cloak helps pull him backward so the legsweep hits him right in the back of the knee. Koan bears a sly grin of triumph at the successful completion of the trip.

KOAN

Feng SCHWEET.

3- On the Margrave, who falls backwards where Koan was, flailing out with his empty right hand ...

4- ... and he grabs Koan's leg!

5 (optional) Reaction shot by Koan. He's terrified. This is the end.

6- On Margrave, once again getting to his feet. Leaving the sword on the ground, he uses his left hand to prop himself up. He's effortlessly holding Koan up by the leg, held in his right hand, and Koan is still fighting. A kick to the head, and Koan's expression is desperate.

KOAN

Hai!

PAGE 16

1- On Margrave, standing tall and composed. He's still holding Koan casually by one leg as Koan punches him across the helmet. As you can tell by the shift from kick to punch, Margrave is pulling Koan in closer.

2- On Koan, who struggles in futility to keep from being absorbed. His legs have begun to slide into Margrave's cosmological torso. Light swirls out, and the star pattern creeps up Koan's body. He's trying to escape Margrave's grasp, but there's just no way.

KOAN

No! Fuck!

3- On Margrave as the last swirling remnant of Koan's body vanishes into his torso. He is looking out, already scanning the horizon, for his sword and for Isobel.

MARGRAVE

So ends Shem the Penman.

4- On Noah, in the lead, with Isobel Shandy right behind and looking backwards. They run through a maze of cars, stopped on the road and abandoned. Noah has not panicked, but he's clearly concerned, able to think of no idea better than 'call for help.' Isobel can think only of the Margrave and of flight.

NOAH

We need to find a payphone.

ISOBEL

I don't see him.

5- On the Margrave, who looms over both Noah and Isobel. The sword is gone, the Margrave walks on air above the cars in all his majestic glory. They're caught.

6- On Noah in the foreground, high in the panel, as he flies away to the upper right. His expression is not one of fear, but one of desperate determination. On the ground, Isobel looks to him in shock and alarm, stunned by this latest abandonment. The Margrave does not even glance at Noah; his attention is locked on Isobel.

PAGE 17

1- On Isobel, whose terrified run leaves her titled and off-center as she runs between two abandoned cars. One of her flip-flops has fallen off. The Margrave can be seen looming behind her, inexorable, walking through the air. This whole chase sequence may have very narrow panels in sequence. To make the chase interesting (these bits are pretty standard in a chase; we have to make the reader work somehow), it may be possible to only show slivers of each shot in the narrow panels, so that the reader can construct the rest of what is happening in the mind.

ISOBEL

Help me! Oh god somebody help me!

2- On Isobel as she slithers on her belly under a car. There's perilously little room under here, and her usually fair hair and skin are increasingly dirty and scratched. The palms of her hands and her elbows will fare the worst, while her white t-shirt and simple jeans become soiled.

ISOBEL

Oh god

3- On Isobel, who recoils in terror as the car is flipped off from over her. It was in the Margrave's way; he is looming up there, moving the car with one hand. Her body is twisted around to look up at him as she screams.

ISOBEL

AAAAA!

4- On Isobel as she looks back at us over her shoulder. She's running down an alley that leads before her. We can see (but she hasn't yet) that it's blocked by a tall gate with a white sign dead center. The letters are very small and only a small part of the sign may be visible. We'll be able to reconstruct the rest.

SIGN

SERVICE ENTRANCE ONLY.

5- On Isobel as she stands beneath us at the end of the alley, almost physically reeling from the sight of the shut gate.

ISOBEL

No! No no no.

6- On the Margrave as he finally closes in on her. The light from the alley entrance is behind him, sending shadows forward before him and occluding his features. He barely fits in here. One hand is extended. He is smiling benevolently.

MARGRAVE

Come consummate, shun not this
tryst.

7- Extreme close up on Isobel's anguished face. She's slowly collapsing against the gate, and while we cannot see it, she is retreating into a curled up ball.

ISOBEL

You're twisted and SICK and I wish
I'd NEVER BEEN BORN!

PAGE 18

Now we leave our heroine poised on the brink of a fate worse than death and take a one page interlude to reveal the terrible fate of James and Andrew Dyson, who have been sucked into the anti-matter dimension that makes up the Margrave, the Universe That Walks Like A Man. All in the name of increasing tension and giving the reader something unexpected.

There's a lot going on this page and it's very weird and surreal, a bit like a Kirby cosmic comic or a Steranko Nick Fury cover. To start with, the coloring is an exaggerated four-color look. Colors are made up of distinct red, blue and green Ben Gay dots. It's like a Warhol Pop Art piece, drawing attention to the artificiality of the scene.

Second, the characters are basically walking through a black void with stars, planets, and the occasional creature or other strange object passing by in the background. Think of those Ditko alternate universes that Dr. Strange was always floating through: if it would fit in one of those, it fits here.

If you feel up to altering the art style of Atlas and Koan to represent a more 70s feel, or a Ditko style, feel free to do that. It would fit the idea. You might also choose to reverse the colors of their costumes, suggesting the anti-matter state to which they have been converted.

Finally, there are no gutters in the standard sense. The panel borders are drawn by a river which runs through the special void acting as a pathway, which Atlas and Koan are wading through.

1- On Atlas, gesturing ahead and wading in a river that forms the lower edge of this 'panel'. There are no other panel borders, so Atlas is pointing towards himself a bit farther down the river in panel two. We are catching Atlas in mid-sentence. Koan floats into the panel from the left side, in the foreground.

ATLAS
river running to the sea.

KOAN
Jimmy! Is this it?

2- Second panel, top row. On Koan as he touches down in the river, clasping Atlas's hand. Atlas has paused in his forward march and has extended a hand up to his brother to help pull him down into what passes for gravity in this place.

ATLAS
We're inside Shandy. In the Anti-Matter Dimension that is his body.

KOAN
It feels like a dream. How do we get BACK?

3- The two brothers move down a short waterfall down the right side of the page to the lower tier of panels that make up panels 4 and 5. Following the river, this second tier will actually go right to left back across the page. Atlas is in front, landing on the lower tier as if he was flying. He is very serious. Koan is sliding down the water like a slide, but he's not happy either. The conversation is grim.

ATLAS
If Shandy unites with his daughter, he'll be able to release this universe, destroying our OWN.

We might survive that, I don't know.

KOAN
But no one else would.

4- Back to the left from panel 3, the reader still carried along by the river. Along the bottom of the page the river is wider. The pick-up truck Atlas threw at the Margrave is sitting in the river, partially submerged, beaten and battered from being thrown through the brick wall. Atlas and Koan walk in front of it.

Atlas gestures to the truck as he talks, looking forward, while Koan is looking more curiously around, perhaps at the stars or strange phenomenon which surround the river.

ATLAS

Only you, me, this pick-up, and everything else he's translated or made up over the years.

5- The last panel of the page, in the lower left corner. Koan has stepped up to just behind Atlas, and gestures up, towards panel 1. Atlas isn't looking up, he's still scanning around his horizontal plane. Koan is interrupted, as his line is actually finished by Atlas in panel 1. The two heroes are trapped in an infinite loop, symbolized by the flowing river.

ATLAS

He's got to return SOON. We need to find some place to hide.

KOAN

Maybe up there along the

PAGE 19

1- On Margrave's back, where a shadow from the alley entrance reveals Noah's return. Margrave himself is reaching down for Isobel, who has curled into herself, arms across her chest, huddled up against the gate that blocks the alley. She looks pitiful and ashamed. Margrave looks back over his shoulder at us. Noah is off panel.

NOAH

Hey, mister.

2- Noah is small and skinny, still in the same ordinary clothes, but now with a domino mask over his face. The mask is too big; it's meant for an adult. He's floating about four feet off the ground in the entrance to the alley. He's flying as if he were standing on the ground, feet a bit apart. With both hands he holds a stainless steel cylinder about a foot long, with a few black rubber-looking rings and bumpers on it. It's not exactly futuristic looking, but the sheer simplicity of its metal construction makes it anonymous. It could be anything. His expression is stony and serious. He's telling the Margrave how it is.

NOAH

That's a fancy trick, converting people to their opposite state and absorbing them into an ANTIMATTER UNIVERSE.

(MORE)

NOAH (cont'd)

But I'm betting that you HAVE to do it to whatever crosses your threshold. It's AUTOMATIC. Not something YOU CONTROL.

3- Closer on Noah as he holds the metal cylinder up by his head.

NOAH

Well, inside this magnetic bottle is one pound of Grade A antimatter, courtesy of ARCHI-TEX. When it enters your body, it's going to be changed to ORDINARY MATTER.

And when the battery on the bottle runs out in FIFTEEN SECONDS, that matter will come into contact with the ANTIMATTER that makes up YOUR ENTIRE BEING.

4- Wide shot. The interior of the alley. Noah is small and in the lower left; he is poised to throw the cylinder in his hand at the giant Margrave, who dominates the right side of the panel. Isobel huddles in her corner in between, closer to Margrave, and while she is still in a near-foetal position, she is watching this development. The Margrave is uncertain; half-turned from Isobel to face this new threat, sword in hand but only half raised.

NOAH

So I'm going to throw this at you now. And you're going to die.

5- Tight on the Margrave. He's skeptical, unsure.

MARGRAVE

The Archi-Texan dwells HOUSTONIAN.

6- Tight on Noah, grinning like a homicidal lunatic.

NOAH

He's in town for a TRADE SHOW. My LUCK huh?

PAGE 20

1- Wide shot. On the Margrave as he gestures with both hands, straight out before him. He may be nothing but an outline as red, blue, and green energy pours out of him. The wind has reversed direction, and in the middle of the light storm are two blurry shapes, one larger than the other.

2 and 3- Inset panels. Reaction shots as the wind suddenly reverses, Isobel raises a hand up to shield her face as her hair is blown away (instead of towards) Margrave. Noah's eyes narrow as he peers into the light, hoping to see his brothers.

4- Wide shot showing the aftermath in the dirty alley. The Margrave is gone. Atlas and Koan are on hands and knees, getting up. Noah is grinning broadly, the cylinder in his hand all but forgotten. Isobel is wide-eyed, still on the ground, shocked to see the Margrave gone and the boys returned.

KOAN
river running to the sea.

PAGE 21

1- On Atlas and Isobel. He has helped her to her feet, while Koan and Noah converse in the background. Noah looks sheepish, while Koan holds the metal cylinder. Atlas is imperturbable, falling instantly back into the heroic mold.

ATLAS
Miss Shandy, you'll stay with Koan
for the next few days.

KOAN
Is this Dad's thermos?

2- Isobel, on the left, still looks worried. She gestures imploringly with both hands before her. Atlas stands on the right, but his gaze is already turned away from her as he looks around for Noah (who is not on panel). Between them, Kona, who is already making physically protective body language towards Isobel. He's closer to her than to his brother James, talking reassuringly to her, even touching her with one hand on the arm, shoulder, or back.

ISOBEL
But he'll FIND me. He's COMING
BACK.

KOAN
I'm UNKNOWABLE. Stick with me, no
one will find you.

ATLAS
That will buy us time to figure out
a long-term solution. Oh, and Noah
...

3- On Noah, who is wide-eyed, as Atlas extends his hand to him in the manner of one professional expressing his respect to another. He's utterly straight faced.

ATLAS

Good work.

4- Atlas hasn't moved. The hand has not moved. Noah stares at the hand, uncertain what to make of it. It's as if his brother suddenly sprouted a third eye.

5- Noah takes the hand, shakes. Atlas smiles.

NOAH

Um, thanks.

PAGE 22

1- Back in the Dyson kitchen, where we began this issue. Isobel, Andy, James, and the elder Dysons (David and Claire) are arrayed around the breakfast nook sharing the story of recent events. There's the remains of a pie on the table and some people still have plates in their hands. Noah is not present. James needs to be on the left, probably with a big slice of pie on his plate. Isobel is doing most of the talking, though occasionally someone else chips in with a question or comment. Andy is closest to Isobel and laughing -- there's already a bond starting up between them. She has a hand on his leg. The mood in the room is good, people are relaxed and smiling, much recovered from the earlier fear. With this panel being pretty wide, it and #2 should finish off the first tier.

JAMES

But Archi-Tex is in HOUSTON!

ISOBEL

That's what he SAID!

But he said he was in town for a
TRADE SHOW!

2- Noah is in the next room, picking up the phone. We can actually still see slices of Isobel and Andy through the door to the kitchen, small in the background, as Andy laughs. Noah is much closer, thoughtful and quiet, hand on the telephone near his father's chair.

ANDY

BWAHAHA!

3- Large split panel across the middle tier, with Noah talking on one side of the phone and STEPHEN DYSON talking on the other. This is the same Stephen who was mentioned in the car conversation before the Margrave showed up, and whom we met in one panel of issue one. Stephen has dark hair, is clean shaven, and is sitting at a desk with a DYSON nameplate on it, along with a computer terminal and various paper files. He's wearing a button down shirt over an impressive physique, though the tie and collar are a bit undone and the sleeves of his shirt have been rolled up along his strong forearms. He wears a shoulder holster with an automatic pistol in it. In this sequence of word balloons, Stephen goes first, Noah second, alternating. Both are fairly expressionless; they are concealing their emotions.

STEPHEN
Dyson, Homicide.

NOAH
Stephen? It's, uh, Noah.

STEPHEN
Oh. Noah. Hi.

Um, what can I do for you?

NOAH
I, uh, I guess you heard everything right? Mom told you?

STEPHEN
If you mean the flying, yeah. Fun, wasn't it.

NOAH
Yeah.

Everyone says I need to sidekick now.

STEPHEN
James will show you what you need to know.

NOAH
Yeah, well, see, I don't want James. I want you.

4- On Stephen, confused. Eyes a little wide. He's flat-footed. This and the remaining panels fill the bottom tier.

STEPHEN

...

Is James hurt? Is he sick or something?

5- Close on Noah, simple and honest, as he talks patiently into the receiver.

NOAH

No, no, I just want you.

So ... I'll see you when school gets out. Okay?

6- On Stephen, utterly shell-shocked. Everyone picks James ahead of him; he's never been chosen first. Never.

STEPHEN

Yeah.

Sure.

Okay.

THE END