

Everything's Been Leading Up To This!

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In an age when "Everything's been leading up to this!" generally means "The sales department says we need a big Summer crossover," Schism is a welcome departure. Everything in Defiant titles has been leading up to this new, four-issue limited series which debuts in July.

"We're doing it as a Summer crossover," says Janet Jackson, Defiant's Creative Director, "but the story was inevitable."

In an effort to make Schism more reader-friendly than some miniseries, readers won't be required to get every single book Defiant publishes in order to know what's happening. It won't be Part One in War Dancer, Part Two in Prudence & Caution, etc. If a reader follows Dark Dominion but not The Good Guys, for instance, one will be able to see exactly how Michael Alexander and the other Dark Dominion characters are affected without feeling forced to buy books one doesn't want. The same is true for the other individual titles. Each book will show the events of Schism from a particular viewpoint.

Readers who follow all of Defiant's titles will see a bigger picture, but the idea is to reward those who collect all the books, not punish those who don't.

Schism, Jackson says, is also a great place for new readers to start: "One of the things we're doing for new readers is revealing the origin of the Defiant Universe, so in addition to kicking off the story, it catches everybody up to date. So, if you've never read a Defiant comic before, and you pick up Schism, you could read every book after that and not have a problem."

In the regular books, trouble has been brewing for some time. Circumstances in Warriors of Plasm, War Dancer, Dark Dominion, and the other Defiant titles have made some sort of great confrontation

unavoidable. That conflict breaks loose in Schism, and the shock waves it sends out will drastically alter the Defiant Universe. No, really. Yes, everyone says that. No, it's not usually true, but in the Defiant tradition, Schism is going well beyond the imaginary limits: It will affect every character, it will change the Defiant Universe, and it will set the foundation for everything that follows.

Plotted by Jim Shooter, Janet Jackson, Len Wein, Alan Weiss, David Lapham, Joe James, and Ed Polgardy, Schism takes the story threads that were

starting to come together in and between the various titles and weaves them into a tapestry of good versus evil in a tale played out on a cosmic scale.

The origin of the crisis rests in the past. Millions of years ago, humankind's collective imagination coalesced to form a place called the Dreamtime. The beings of this realm—

products of human fantasy—didn't know they were dreams. They lead lives of their own.

Then, on Earth, came the Black Death, the plague that decimated Europe 700 years ago. The Dreamtime was darkened by death and apprehension, but there was also the spark of hope. That hope, the will to live, never faded,



By J. C. Vaughn



in humankind or in the denizens of the Dreamtime.

A prince of the Dreamtime, Arhq Tsolmec, and his princess, Zahnree, burned with that will to live. They began The Dance of Two, a ritual meant to end death and empower life. The dance, though, was never finished. It was interrupted by the Prince's rivals, individuals driven by jealousy and lust for power the way

Arhq Tsolmec was driven by the love of life. The interruption resulted in a chaos known as the Great Schism.

The Dreamtime was cut off from the dreamers on Earth. It spawned an entity desperately hungry for life, an entity that began to feed itself, and change, and grow. This alternate reality came, over time, to be called Plasm.

Since the Dreamtime was cut off from Earth, dreams could no longer go there. They began to inhabit the world around us, seen but not quite seen, real but no quite real.

Michael Alexander, also known as Glimmer in Dark Dominion, has seen the result of the Great Schism, even if he hasn't known thus far what he's been looking at. In Schism, he's about to find out the hard way! Glimmer and the other characters in the Defiant Universe are about to be pushed, pulled, and dragged into a tremendous clash, a battle announced by the return of Arhq Tsolmec, also known as the War Dancer (he first appeared in *Warriors of Plasm* #7, and first came to Earth in *War Dancer* #1). He is on a mission to find his princess and correct the damage wrought by the Great Schism—or end all existence.

And that's just the beginning ...

Schism will feature layouts by David Lapham (the regular writer/artist on *Warriors of Plasm*), and finished art by Dave Taylor, Dick Giordano,

and J. G. Jones. The scripting chores will be handled by Len Wein and Jim Shooter. Schism will appear in four 48-page issues on a weekly schedule.

At the Heroes World trade show in May, Jim Shooter announced that for Schism, Defiant "has a great gimmick: A great story!" Come July, readers will be able to see for themselves. 🐉