

Have you ever tried actually drawing out a story line? Not, that is, illustrating a tale with pictures or abstract symbols, but using a simple line and its curves to visually represent the development of a plot. Most stories, I suppose, would produce vectors headed inexorably in one direction, the line rising and falling to indicate lulls and crises. A moderately exciting story of drama or adventure would look like a mountain range or a stock market graph. The first arc of Jeff Lemire's Justice League United, and the only arc he is likely to write for that title, would be a lot more complicated than a stock market report. It has its peaks and valleys, of course, but the direction is not straight or constant, but fantastically curving. The graph of Justice League United would be a set of interlocking spirals. Lemire has already foreshadowed this. The problems of Adam and Alanna Strange have been a metaphor for the entire book up to this point. Constantly changing places in space due to a teleportation accident, they sketch a series of giant loops across the plot. The use of Rann and Thanagar is another hint. These two civilizations, locked in a cycle of struggle and recrimination, are the social equivalent of two dancers circling in great arcs across a crowded ballroom, disrupting the music and sending other dancers scurrying in anger and exasperation. As for the Legion of Superheroes, what can one say? The immense complications of that sprawling organisation have stymied readers and writers for at least thirty years, if not longer. Now we have two separate contingents of Legion members separated by and moving through time, the actions of one affecting the situation of the other in the kind of recursion that is common in time travel plots but about which a reader had best not think too hard if he or she wants to avoid a migraine. But the largest spiral of all is traced by the grand story of the villain Byth. At the end of the arc, Byth finds himself hurled back in time to begin his plots again. We are told that the adventures sketched in Lemire's Justice League United are just the latest iteration of a set of events that have occurred in other forms in other timelines. In the famous tag of Battlestar Galactica, "All of these things have happened before; all of these things will happen again." The end of the story closes several more loops, as Rann and Thanagar find themselves in a new relationship, the future of both Supergirl and the Braniac 5 is teased, and the child Ultra returns to the beginning in a way that would have been deeply tragic in a less cluttered, more focused story. And that is the ultimate problem with this arc. Lemire seems simply to have let the story get out of control, rendering what might have been an epic of time and destiny into a series of muddy, inconclusive plot gestures. Far back at the beginning of the series, many critics observed that the art rescued the words in this particular comic. That continues to the very end. Neil Edward's clear, thin lines and precise curves suggest dynamic movement across the usual series of irregular panels and splash pages. Leisten and Champagne have plentiful opportunity to show off their inking skills in the darkness of space. And Jeromy Cox's colors, as always, bring a vibrancy and sense of explosive life that suggests the ultimate themes of the series more effectively than either Lemire's words or Edwards' images. The post Justice League United #10 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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