



VALIANT

#1

HANDBOOK 2014

FREE COMIC BOOK DAY

VALIANT

UNIVERSE



LA ROSA



X-O MANOWAR

REAL NAME: Aric of Dacia

BASE OF OPERATIONS: Nebraska, United States of America

KNOWN ALLIES: Alexander Dorian; Eternal Warrior; Livewire; Ninjak

ENEMIES: The Armor Hunters; Toyō Harada; The Roman Empire; The Vine

FIRST APPEARANCE: X-O MANOWAR #1

KNOWN ABILITIES: A highly-skilled swordsman and experienced battlefield commander; when wearing the X-O Manowar armor, Aric has enhanced strength, flight, accelerated healing and access to the armor's full weaponry, including energy blasts, wrist-mounted missiles, and energy constructs such as a lightning sword; the sentient armor can also translate languages and intercept electronically transmitted communications for the wearer.

HISTORY: Born into battle, Aric of Dacia—heir to the throne of the Visigoth people—never knew peace. Raised under the oppressive thumb of the Roman Empire in fifth-century Europe, his entire life was a never-ending series of campaigns against Rome, until a far more terrifying enemy came into play: the brutal race of alien colonizers known as the Vine. Abducted during a midnight scouting raid and taken to the far reaches of space, Aric and his fellow Visigoth captives lived their lives as slaves to the Vine, with no hope of escape.

After several years of captivity aboard a Vine colony ship, Aric led a revolt against his alien captors, storming the hallowed temple of the Vine and stealing their most powerful relic—Shanhara, the sentient X-O Manowar armor. Aric bonded with the armor—the first being in living memory to survive the process—and turned the Vine's most powerful weapon against them. But a crushing counterattack by the Vine left many of Aric's allies dead or dying. Inexperienced with the armor himself, Aric barely escaped the Vine fleet before rocketing back to Earth.

Upon his return, Aric learned that—due to the effects of time dilation—1,600 years had passed since his abduction, and he was now stranded in the 21st century. Distraught by the loss of his family and people, Aric secluded himself in the Peruvian jungle—but the Vine were unwilling to leave their most sacred relic in human hands. Vine legend told that their greatest champion would one day wear the armor; news of a human controlling the suit could spell massive civil unrest for their empire.

To recover it, covert Vine agents called “plantings”—left on Earth hundreds of years ago and modified to appear human—recruited the super-spy Ninjak to kill Aric and return the armor. But with the help of a Vine planting traitor named Alexander Dorian, Aric turned Ninjak against his alien masters and led an attack on the Vine's secret headquarters inside Britain's MI-6, virtually eliminating the plantings' operations in England.

The Vine, however, responded with a full force invasion—one that proved to be no match for the X-O Manowar armor. However, Aric realized that there would be no peace with the Vine... until they were destroyed. Commandeering a Vine ship, Aric mounted a one-man invasion of the alien race's homeworld, Loam, toppling the



UNITY

CURRENTLY ACTIVE MEMBERS: Eternal Warrior; Livewire; Ninjak; X-O Manowar

PREVIOUS MEMBERS: Anchor; Bomb; the Captain; Ether; Mirror

BASE OF OPERATIONS: Mobile

ENEMIES: The Armor Hunters; Toyo Harada; Dr. Silk; Webnet

FIRST APPEARANCE: UNITY #1

HISTORY: Brought together by Toyo Harada—the world’s most powerful telekinetic and the billionaire visionary behind the secretive Harbinger Foundation—the elite team of extraordinary individuals called Unity was assembled for one purpose: to stop X-O Manowar before his invasion of Romania triggered a world war. Armed with the alien X-O Manowar armor, Aric of Dacia liberated the last remnants of his people from the alien empire of the Vine and resettled them on Earth. However, the land that Aric chose for the new Visigoth homeland happened to be situated in modern-day Eastern Europe—an aggressive show of war that sent the world into high alert. Hoping to prevent Russia from retaliating with nuclear weapons, Harada sent his most elite combat unit, codenamed Unity, into Romania to preemptively eliminate Aric... and claim the X-O Manowar armor for himself.

Originally comprised of Harada’s most powerful super-psiots—Bomb, Mirror, Ether, and the Captain—the first Unity team was quickly exterminated within minutes of their opening attack on X-O Manowar. With his alpha team lost, Harada had no choice but to recruit a far more lethal and unpredictable team to carry out his operations on the ground in Europe.

The second team selected by Harada to complete Unity’s mission included not only himself, but the Eternal Warrior, an immortal who has dedicated his existence to serving the Earth for over 10,000 years; Ninjak, a freelance secret agent and weapons expert of unparalleled skill and cunning; and Harada’s former pupil Livewire, a fearsome teletech-nopath with the power to control machinery and computers whose loyalty to Harada came into question after she helped his star pupil, Peter Stanchek, escape from the Foundation. Sent back into Romania, the new and untested team stormed Aric’s command center aboard an alien battlecruiser. But, having anticipated their brazen assault, Aric launched the spacecraft into the stratosphere, gaining a massive tactical advantage. Despite this, Livewire was able to interface with the ship’s computer and sever Aric’s connection to the X-O Manowar armor, seizing control of Shanbara for herself.

However, even without the hugely powerful armor at his command, Aric and his people refused to yield. As their ship plummeted back to Earth and sank to the bottom of the

ocean, Harada decided to eliminate their threat once and for all, drowning as many survivors as he could. But, Livewire—now in full control of the X-O Manowar armor—defied her master's will yet again and saved Aric's people, while also managing to repel a nuclear attack from two nearby submarines.

The armor now in hand, Harada brokered peace between the world governments with which Aric had clashed, and turned the Visigoth and his followers over to U.S. custody. But Livewire's connection to the armor—now under Harada's control—gave her a secret insight into his true motivations and secret agenda. Convinced of Harada's duplicity and lust for power, Ninjak, the Eternal Warrior, and Livewire turned against him, and stole the armor back to return to Aric, who—after acknowledging the short-sightedness of his invasion attempt—pledged to work under the auspices of Unity to secure a better world.

Now an independent team under the direction of Ninjak, Unity undertook its next mission against the mysterious Dr. Silk and his high-tech terror cell Webnet. After Webnet unleashed a designer virus, the Unity team's mettle is tested on a global scale when they are forced to prevent worldwide disaster and the deaths of millions. However, Dr. Silk's connection to the shadowy past of Unity's members might threaten their fragile alliance yet again. ■

RECOMMENDED READING:

UNITY VOL. 1: TO KILL A KING TPB

X-O MANOWAR VOL. 5: AT WAR WITH UNITY TPB

Recruited by the Harbinger Foundation's Togo Harada, the second Unity team—consisting of Ninjak, the Eternal Warrior, and Livewire—met X-O Manowar on the field of battle in the middle of Bucharest, Romania.

ACTIVE MEMBERS



X-O MANOWAR
ALIEN-ARMORED WARRIOR



NINJAK
SUPER-SPY



ETERNAL WARRIOR
MASTER TACTICIAN



LIVEWIRE
TELETECHNOPATH





RAI

REAL NAME: Unknown

BASE OF OPERATIONS: Japan

KNOWN RELATIVES: Unknown

ENEMIES: Members of the "Raddie" neo-Luddite sect; criminals of all kinds; defilers of Father's order

FIRST APPEARANCE: RAI #1

KNOWN ABILITIES: Enhanced speed, strength, and agility; mastery of martial arts, hand-to-hand combat, swordsmanship, and armed combat.



HISTORY: By the year 4001, industrialization in Japan had begun to consume every square inch of free space within the island nation's borders. To house and feed its growing population, the country had built upon its own infrastructure centuries before, turning the whole of Japan into a towering pillar, hundreds of miles wide. Eventually, the nation detached from Earth entirely, and now orbits the planet.

Governed by a mysterious yet benevolent artificial intelligence named Father, the Japan of 4001 is divided into various sectors, with names derived from the time of founding, and generally separated among lines of economic status and social class. Where a citizen's sector falls in the literal hierarchy of Japan's many sectors also directly affirms their social ranking; the closer you are to the Earth, the less essential you are.

While the higher classes of Japanese society rely on advanced technology, including sophisticated, human-looking robots—or PTs, for Positronic Minds—on every level of their daily lives, discontent has brewed for centuries on Japan's middle and lower levels, resulting in the formation of an extremist anti-technology sect called Raddies, who have vowed to overthrow Father and every symbol of his technologically enabled reign.

Standing solitary guard at the top of Japan's miles-high structure is Rai—the lead enforcer of Father's justice and a figure of near-mythic stature to Japanese citizens of all ages. To some he is the ghost of Japan's past personified, to others a "spirit guardian" and folk hero. They say that he can appear out of nowhere, and possesses a near-universal sight over Father's people. But few have ever seen him...until the first murder in nearly a millennium brings Rai to the forgotten sectors of Father's empire, and threatens to topple a Japan that has taken nearly two thousand years to erect. ■

BELOW: In the year 4001, Japan has become a towering spire, orbiting the Earth. To shelter its millions of citizens, society is now divided into physical "sectors" of varying luxury and comfort, such as Sector 3001 (pictured here), also known as the "War Corridor."



Rai leads a solitary existence in Japan's uppermost sector—a tranquil sanctuary far removed from the hyper-urbanization of the towering nation's lower quadrants.