

The last couple issues established a powerful dynamic between Ray and Nomax, in which the chain reaction between their respective crazies just keeps building and building. No wonder Ray goes into fits every now and then; that's a lot of hyperactive energy for a man in his condition to take. Honestly, the series can probably keep running on this combustion of creative and egomania perpetually, but Morrison, never one to coast, changes up the act by bringing in Luna Kozma, Ray's infamous ex. Ray's eagerness to mire himself in the dark makes him complicit in Nomax's arrival (and his own medical crisis), but Luna, as it turns out, is a completely innocent character. You thought that might have been the case. The way Ray is, you're not surprised that she's not surprised by his latest mental break ("Oh my God, what's he done this time?"), and even less so that she "had a complete breakdown... I was eighteen years old. It was fun at first but all the time he wanted more and more of everything." Freeing herself from Ray's all-consuming addictions—to drugs, sex, writing—was an achievement. Forced to flee with Ray and Nomax from Makro, she risks getting pulled into that deep, dark hole again. Luna, being relatively stable, is unfit to keep up with either Ray or Nomax's antics, but she does them a favor in slowing them down. Ray for once is sidetracked from both his feverish fantasies and the paralyzing reality of his illness, somewhat normalizing in his concern and excitement at seeing his ex again. As for Nomax, he actually gets a bit soft around Luna, maybe by virtue of her resemblance to Olympia, maybe out of a mutual disgust for her former flame. Luna forces both men to explain themselves instead of firing off scattershot ideas, which is perfect as Ray's script and *Annihilator's* story enters its simmering middle stretch. As Ray reveals more of his plot, you realize the movie that started out in #1 as "dystopian science fiction" is becoming essentially a sci-fi horror. That's not a condemnation. Ray's original product was labored and forced, something he had to buy a house and host a Satanic, drug-fueled orgy to write. Now the story just comes spilling out of him as he furiously types on his phone in a motel room, and while it's not as high-concept as before (the Select transform from "celebrate neo-nihilists" into "hard-ass dominion special forces"), it flows with far greater momentum. Just to remind you that this is a piece of Morrisonian metafiction here, you can see a parallel between the evolution of Ray's script and the creation of the dreaded Oorga within it. Just as it was the studio that demanded he write the aforementioned dystopian science fiction that was his original premise, Vada forced the Rodinson Group to create life to "Vada's exact specifications. Except Vada totally screwed up the recipe," resulting in a creature that threatens to destroy everything. The question, then, is whether anyone will survive the continued growth of Ray's story. Even Nomax, brilliant and possibly fictional as he is, isn't immune from danger. Despite the sneering confidence with which he entered Dis, he's reduced to a sobbing, shaking heap after his fifth failed attempt at creating his own universe, thrown into a despair so black he even accepts the Bug Eyes' offer of emotional contact. Ultimately, much like everything else in this series, his actions prove self-destructive; he's the one who awakens Oorga then shoots his stuffed companion when it tries to protect him, exposing himself to Oorga's face-burning saliva. But as Nomax's mask comes off, will he reveal the anti-hero Ray initially thought him to be, or an asshole who half-asses his way to oblivion? Irving's distinctive style can be an acquired taste, but there's no denying that he knows exactly what he's doing at all times and demonstrates complete control doing it. As I just discussed the importance of the right visuals to the comic book experience, the horror aspects of this issue are right up his alley: the characters' drawn faces, the Bug Eyes' unnaturally crooked neck, and Oorga's countless, spindly, eyeball-studded limbs—all of it is terrible to see in the moment, but leaves your vision unsettled afterwards as well. Irving also proves surprisingly adept at Morrison's wild comedy as well, somehow finding the grim slapstick

in Ray's seizures and highlighting Nomax's wackiness* with the craziest of eyes and grins. Some Musings: * He may be an ass, but he's a hilarious ass. He berates the car, "Why won't it fly! I demand flight! And what's this hellish music!" Also, to Luna's confusion as to why she trusts him, he suggests, "Charisma. Sheer bloody dick-swinging machismo, my dear! You tell me." No, no, I think you got it right the first time, Nomax. - NLP stands for neuro-linguistic programming, basically a bit of quackery that claims to change things with a combination of mind power and language. It's Jedi mind trickery, is what it is. The post Annihilator #4 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

Read more: <http://weeklycomicbookreview.com/2014/12/23/annihilator-4/>