

I've been feeling the familiar numbness of indifference seep into my readings of Aquaman for the last few months, but I've never really been able to pin down where it was coming from. Parker's put a lot of effort into taking Arthur new, unexpected places each issue, and that's been a reliable source of interest. But it still feels like the series is lacking some vital spark to take it from diverting (read: worth perusing in the store) to critical (read: worth buying for many readings to come). Unsurprisingly, it took rereading Geoff Johns' Aquaman to see the missing piece from Parker's. The character work just isn't what it used to be on this title. Parker has kept Arthur and Mera's essence intact, but it's been a long time since he found them new dimensions. The newer characters have fared even worse, except for maybe Tula, when she's paired off with Mera on an ass-kicking mission. It's the same problem couples who've been with each other too long experience: they've stagnated, and their only area of growth is boredom. That's a funny analogy to make when Arthur and Mera's marriage seems to be as rock-solid, but in many ways, the very consistency of their relationship proves my point. I'd never want them to stop being completely supportive of each other, but being on the same page so often just gets too damn predictable, especially when they're in action. Too often, as in this issue, it's Arthur punching an obstacle in the face, failing, and Mera bailing him out. You appreciate him acknowledging who's the tank here ("See, now you've gotten Mera mad!"), but it just feels odd for him to come across as the second banana in his own title. *Maybe the problem is Parker's got our couple trapped on these steamrolling sort of plotlines, rarely giving them a moment to just interact and show some personality. With a kind of horror, I'm starting to realize that when I think of Arthur as a person, my mind draws a blank. It's like I have no idea who he is these days at all. I feel like I knew and related to him better back when he was reminiscing about his dad at his lighthouse home or reconnecting with old friends among the Others. But the last time he really had a chance to be himself, not King Arthur or Aquaman, was his high school reunion in Amnesty Bay, and that was months ago. Food for thought, indeed. But again, that's not to take away from the good, old-fashioned superhero ridiculousness Parker brings on a monthly basis. In this issue, Arthur and Mera enter a portal from Gorilla City and come out in Oceania, where Arthur dusts off his Polynesian before they battle four giant guardian statues to jump into another portal—in a whirlpool—that takes them to a Savage Land-inspired pocket dimension. So yeah, there's plenty to be entertained by here. It just feels like it doesn't mean much when the characters don't really resonate. Pelletier's art is as fine as it's ever been, capable of all of Parker's flights of fancy and occasional character moments. The battle against the guardian statutes is bombastic and full of energy, though maybe lacking in that epic quality you get from the top tier of mainstream artists. Beredo's coloring has a lot of vibrance, but it's also accurate, capturing light, whether beneath the dappled shade of the jungle or the overcast skies of the Pacific islands, with a clean, natural quality. Some Musings: * I just heard that Superman's getting a new superpower, and I'm thinking, When's Aquaman getting his upgrade? Is he going to be stuck with super-jumps forever? - A gang of purple-eyed natives...do I sense Garth around the corner?? The post Aquaman #38 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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