

I'm of two minds about this final story Willingham's going to tell about Rose and Snow. In the first, I don't really give a crap. These women already have actual, major problems to deal with without having to worry about this magically mandated rivalry between them. In fact, at the end of the issue, Snow's rushing off to face hers (the result of which could put an end to the question of who wins between her and Rose altogether) while Rose is getting family history from a cricket. But my second mind is, in spite of itself, fascinated by the tale of their mother, Lauda, and her own family problems. With magic involved, Willingham doesn't provide much explanation as to what drives the sisters' instinct to destroy each other and gain their power, or where that power comes from to begin with, or why it all starts when their mother is no longer of childbearing age. Like many magical destinies, it all just is, much as it has always been and seemingly always will be. That makes the ensuing scheming and murdering all the more pointless, but a compelling read, in a sordid kind of way. Willingham's always had the right knack for making magic seem grounded instead of arbitrary, and that comes through in the way it takes years for the sisters to construct spells against each other and the strangely logical way they can fight back. Tobba, for instance, cursed with a spell that transforms her into a rose bush, shows enough spirit to grow a rose—before a crow swoops down to pluck it away, ending the comeback. Whether by magic or basic pharma, the results are always painful, either sending some sisters vomiting and defecating themselves to death, or burning to death, or transmogrifying to death. That's a lot of sadism in one family, even for one in which all the children are born killers, as Lauda calls them. At the same time, she suggests that individual natures have a part in determining how bloodthirsty each is. A few years into this grim war, Lauda notes that two sisters are responsible for the deaths thus far, meaning some are more sociopathic than others. But if their battle royale is decreed by fate, can any of the sisters truly reject the call to fratricide or resist the power it offers as reward? Lauda claims to do so, focusing all her effort not on attack or defense, but misdirection. Snow and Rose's existence attests to her survival, but the fact that they're now enmeshed in the same generational cycle means Lauda didn't entirely escape her legacy. You can easily see her offer to relinquish her own power in addition to the power of her dead sisters as a ruse; she avoids battle long enough for her sisters to whittle each other down while she accumulates her own power in peace. That's my bet, and I'm sticking to it. Oh, yeah, we briefly revisit Brandish and Lancelot's duel, which is going fourteen hours strong. I find it shockingly stupid that Ambrose is just watching the whole time instead of putting all his resources into uncovering Brandish's hidden heart. I have no words left for this truly pointless struggle. Generally, Buckingham does such an unremarkably fine job that it's not even worth wasting words talking about it, and I often don't. But this issue reveals his sloppier side, with the occasional one eye larger than the other and stray line jutting out disfiguringly from a character's face or body. These are small things, but noticeable when Buckingham doesn't use too many lines in his work to begin with. Our last tale for this issue features Jack of Fables, so obviously, it has to be one of the better ones. As written by Matthew Sturges, even as a wandering spirit, Jack is as unrepentantly audacious as ever (and lusty: "The main trick to having sex as a ghost, I will confide, is that you have to be careful that when you're inside a lady you don't lose focus and end up literally inside her."). Not even a near eternity in his own personal hell humbles him, but actually leaves him more self-centered than before, this time with a whole universe revolving around his whims.* Russ Braun and Andrew Dalhouse bring their usual bounciness to the feature, heightening all of Jack's cartoonish ego without making much of an artistic impression. Some Musings:* I'll stick to non-existence, thank you. The post Fables #148 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

Read more: <http://weeklycomicbookreview.com/2015/01/29/fables-148/>