

For a comicbook whose series has been all doom-and-gloom for better part of over a year, and one that features a cover that proudly sports “THE END” with characters facing away and shrouded in darkness, this was surprisingly rousing, bright, and affirming. Which I suppose is the point— and what most fans really want from the Fantastic Four anyway. The difficulty seems to be when such stuff has to be pitched with a completely opposite tone of “sturm und drang” that feels out of place and somewhat forced. To paraphrase Mr. Fantastic’s own dialogue here, it all happened “not with a plan but as a formula.” In other words, with the Quiet man as our villain, one who operates in the background to orchestrate events upon the Fantastic Four, how can things NOT feel forced throughout these last twenty-some issues? Maybe some “forcing” is okay when it’s executed well. The showdown between Mr. Fantastic and the Quiet Man had the right amount of tension and even a touch of humor, showing Fantastic to be in control and the Quiet Man to be out of his league through some brilliant pacing of the panels and the color of the red alarm. The race to get out of the portal to the Dream Earth also flowed extremely well and kept the tension and the excitement high. Unfortunately, other things didn’t work, such as the continued subplot of the Invisible Woman “turned” into Malice, which is hard to describe in this review simply because I can’t describe it to myself. It’s handled merely as a token phrase, and is not particularly effected nor is it made visual. I was also confused with Johnny Storm’s supposed sacrifice. The stakes for such a move were not presented well, so when he shoves Wyatt out of the way it feels completely out of left field. Also coming our way from left field, Johnny getting his powers back. Mr. Fantastic gives a hand-wavy explanation over some coffee later, calling attention to the fact that it ultimately doesn’t matter “how” so long as it works. But if it’s so “easy” to just get and give them away, it ultimately doesn’t matter *either way* so why do it all? Another forced point? And with all the build-up of using Sleepwalker/Rick Sheridan, they are not involved at all in the denouement. The last time we even see Rick, he’s lying prone in some shielded coma thing, which presumably was caught in the explosion that everyone was worried about with Johnny? And if Franklin can make the creatures of the Dream Earth disappear, why not the other parts of it too? At the very least wouldn’t the nightmare-versions of the Avengers disappear instead of just falling to the ground, their bodies just lying there even after the Dream-Earth is destroyed? Don’t worry. They have no souls, so it’s okay. Oh, and we found the Puppet Master. He’s been in a small room the whole time. The end of the battle provides Johnny the opportunity to create a giant “4” in the sky. It symbolizes hope and helps create a celebratory feeling that’s been need for a long time. Although, it’s interesting the symbol is in the new square-shaped “4” logo, rather than the classic circle. The remainder of the book continues with this celebratory feeling, with reminiscing from previous creators and small stories each with their own signature look and tone. In fact, those stories are so effective, I might hope for the future publications of the Fantastic Four to take this more indy-anthology feel. The post Fantastic Four #645 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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