

Start spreading the news, folks: Johns has finally learned how to write Wonder Woman. In the beginning, Diana seemed like the Justice League's brainless powerhouse, starting and ending sentences with requests to fight. Then came the fallow period, when she hardly featured at all. As recently as #37, even with most of her cast-mates out of commission, Diana entered the picture only to demonstrate her battle prowess, leaving the plot advancement to her male colleagues. As if to make up for these inequities, Johns lets Diana take command of the narrative this issue—which isn't quite the honor it sounds like. Musing on the isolating, destructive side-effects of plague is very typical end-of-world angst (not to mention we don't actually see people cowering in fear or running amuck here). Referring to her experience battling monsters feels too much like the conflict-obsessed Diana she started this series as. All in all, Diana's internal voice is as bland and undistinctive as ever. But Johns nails it once he has her interact with others, particularly Luthor. We saw in #34 that even without the Lasso, Diana somehow brings out the best in the man. Of all the Leaguers, she's the one most willing to believe in him, something that can only be done out of love. Admittedly, there's not much love in her pragmatic assessment that "[y]ou two working together is our best chance, Superman. So we give him one more." But in addressing Luthor directly, repeating, "One more chance," she's showing him forgiveness right there, another act that requires love. Luthor responds with remarkable sincerity. "I'll do it, Diana. I will." "I believe you," she says, and you believe her. There are quite a lot of these little character moments for Diana, and what's remarkable is they all show Diana's kinder side. Don't get me wrong; fighting the infected League singlehandedly gives her plenty of excellent ass-kicking to do and there's the suggestion she's holding back so as not to hurt any of them. But the truly important things are Diana's desire to minimize the damage ("Don't shoot any of them, Steve. They're innocents—") and her ability to connect with anybody. Even Snart is charmed. He declares, "Contrary to what you and the rest of the League might think, when it comes to the survival of the human race, I'm for it." "So am I, Leonard," Diana agrees. "Leonard? When you say it, it don't sound so bad." While Johns seems to be on his A-game when it comes to playing the characters off each other, the plot is really a shabby affair. The fact that he starts the issue with a monologue on the social impact of disease but follows up with your typical superhero bash should tell you this is not a story that requires much brainwork. Patient Zero is defeated by no brilliant strategy, but the completely arbitrary fact that he's vulnerable to cold and unable to mimic it for no apparent reason. At close to the last minute, Luthor finally reveals who Patient Zero really is—was—even though it's way too late for anyone to care. All this to give Johns and anybody else who's game to introduce a whole new wave of metahumans. That is the point of this arc, yes? To allow some of those meta'd patients to keep their powers and reveal them to be New 52 versions of lesser-known heroes and villains? Johns already gives us a taste with a paunchy man who bears lightning powers* and a clear view of Amos Fortune, founder of the Royal Flush Gang. I'm somewhat excited by the prospect, of course, but kind of bummed that we had to go through a kind of drag of a storyline to get there. While Johns' writing has fluctuated throughout the arc, Fabok has never wavered in delivering the highest quality of mainstream art. Like Ivan Reis, he has the knack of balancing their superhuman physique with, well, humanity. He never goes overboard with the beef or cheese, and he can really sell those character moments with small, even subtle changes of expression: Clark's wry smile and Diana's helplessly amused one at Snart's posing; Luthor's focused features as Diana gives him another chance; Snart's slightly obnoxious grin as he boasts about his first official act as a superhero. Anderson's colors never fail to feel warm and vibrant without sacrificing a strong sense of reality. Some Musings:- I am such a sucker for

reformation stories. I really want Snart to keep enjoying the hero's life and stick to it, even though I know we can't just lose one of the Flash's biggest Rogues.- Hal Jordan is back, as always, to steal someone's thunder. First it was Simon Baz; now it's Jessica Cruz. I really am starting to understand Batman's disgust for the guy.- Thank you, Fabok, for making Diana look as tall as any of the guys. The symbolism is important. The post Justice League #39 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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