

After an introduction last month, Supergirl 37 presents our first real opportunity to explore Crucible Academy and take the measure of the concept. There's certainly many facets to the school that provide plentiful jumping off points for future stories, but we already knew that this run had potential; the question is how well it realizes that potential. Well, once again it's a mixed bag. I don't know that this issue quite reaches the highs of its predecessor, but it's low is miles above last issue's. Really, the biggest problem of the issue is it's somewhat madcap pacing. There are so many ideas at play here. It's impressive on one level, but the transitions between them are practically non-existent and it's hard to lock in on what the central issues of this installment are. It feels, not incorrectly, like we're switching characters, locations, and scenes nearly every other page and it can quickly become exhausting, not to mention somewhat fragmented. The writing is strong but it also feels at least a little disjointed. Even the opening page's narration feels oddly out of step with the images before us, despite being a fairly standard maneuver. The whole thing gives Supergirl #37 a certain ADHD flavor, which I suppose could be charming if you come to it in the right headspace. Though I would have liked to see a little more focus on the standard experiences of being a student, there is a subtle thread of Kara trying to fit in with her study group and finding her strengths in the course of her studies. On a more direct level, things could use some depth, Maxima in particular could use a more original characterization, but her mother's backstory is very intriguing and Tsavo is coming along nicely as a new cast member for Kara. Likewise, I'm really glad that Perkins and Johnson decided to give us a look at the operations of Crucible. Maybe I'm just a sucker for the politics of making the world better, but the issue frames the inherent tension between being a school and a near-military training operation quite nicely. I worry that Superboy's presence in the book may derail Kara's development, but you can't deny that the whole storyline is quite fascinating. I also have to say that the idea to include a line about the "Green Lantern: Godhead" crossover, which could have felt like a tiresome editorial demand, was a great chance to make Crucible feel like a part of the DC universe and to clarify its place in it. Emanuela Lupacchino and Ray McCarthy continue to be an excellent art team for this book. Lupacchino and McCarthy stick to a less cartoony style than they employed during the "Red Daughter of Krypton" storyline, at least until we touch down on NGO, but Lupacchino composes each panel with more than enough energy to make up for anything lost in the change. It's also nice how youthful the title looks. From the realistic button noses to the clear brashness she imbues the students with to the touches of apparent manga influence, you can feel that these are teenagers - worse, teenagers who have been told that they're the best. I also definitely see what Lupacchino was talking about at Special Edition: NY this year when it comes to sexualization of characters. Lupacchino's figures are drawn pretty sexy, but almost never exploitatively. It hits everyone, from Kara to Comet - perhaps especially Comet. There's a fluidity I'm hesitant but compelled to call sensual in Lupacchino's lines that helps to unify her look. Indeed, Lupacchino demonstrates a rather impressive range, if only in singular panels, that even more impressively feels like a cohesive style. She's more than willing to change how she draws to sell the emotion of a panel, and it works very well for her. It's also clear that Ray McCarthy's assistance is extremely valuable, especially if you look at how different Lupacchino's art looks on the cover, where she works without McCarthy. And, of course, it wouldn't be right to overlook hi-fi studios, who provide bold and beautiful colors to the issue. The lighting gradients in this issue are subtle but instantly visible and understandable. Maxima's orange skin seems to be a particularly fertile playground for hi-fi and the emotions of the characters are frequently communicated through the gentle shadows on their faces. The post Supergirl #37 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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