

Last month was an exciting one for me in a lot of ways, and I guess a few things slipped my mind as a result. One of those things was Swamp Thing #36, which I didn't even notice I had missed until I started reading this issue and wondered how we suddenly ended up in Lady Weeds' hospital room. Fortunately, it doesn't look like I've missed much of anything at all (which makes me curious as to what exactly happened in #36). It's a cinch to see what the Calculus wants with Weeds: they want an avatar and she's the logical candidate. And Alec should be afraid—very afraid. She not only hates his guts and has tried to bump him off once before (and very nearly succeeded, if it weren't for Wolf's completely inexplicable change of heart), she's now had three whole issues where she had nothing to do except plot her vengeance. Considering how close she came to defeating Alec by acting on the fly, you can only imagine how much damage she can do with a thoroughly worked out plan: "I searched that plan for flaws, tore it apart and rebuilt it. Again and again." It certainly seems that way. As the Machine Queen, she already has far more power at her disposal than she probably conceived in her original designs, but she's not content to coast on that alone. She wants to crush Alec; she wants to overpower him, outnumber him, and outthink him, all at once. That's why she gets Miki, the Grey's avatar, to ally with her before tracking down the escaped Anton Arcane, who may be a pitiful shadow of himself now, but who has in his possession some major collateral against Alec. It's pretty remarkable how Arcane was apparently able to sneak into Alec's swamp and dig out his body without him noticing, but you can imagine the corpse Weeds' steamrolling personality may be necessary to defeat Alec, but it may also be the key to her ultimate failure. Arcane proved that going against one's Parliament usually ends well, and thus far, Alec's the only one who's managed to get away with it. The four Calculus—A, B, C, and Omega, "the four primary consciousnesses that determine the Machine Kingdom's course of action"—may okay Weeds' superficial changes (the Calculus is now "the Rithm") and tolerate her usurping command from them for now, but clearly, she's working on her own agenda, not theirs. Already, she's begun to minimize them ("This is where you boys can come in handy."), so you can easily foresee the critical moment when they'll act out against her. As you can see, this is all table-setting for a bigger confrontation later on, which makes this issue mostly a lot of chatting. Soule does make the talking heads very readable, and tries to inject a little spice with Constantine's guest turn, but John ultimately does nothing except fill in Alec on what we see for ourselves. He's not even willing to give Alec a hand (though maybe his conscience will prick him to do so later on), not because he doesn't want to, but because he feels this war between kingdoms is out of even his wheelhouse. This is all to tell us that things are about to get real on this title, which is an exciting prospect as we come closer to the end of Soule's run. Saiz just keeps getting better and better at this horror stuff in my estimation. The rebirth of Weeds into the Machine Queen is actually rather nauseating to watch, between A Calculus unemotionally plunging his claws, fangs, and cables into her former, incapacitated body, and her shiny new body ripping its way out of his back afterwards. Besides that, Saiz has been so good about giving a distinct aesthetic to each kingdom and its denizens: the smooth, elegant symmetry of the machines, Miki's gnarled and fleshy plates, Alec's soft, verdant body. Kudos to Hollingsworth's shadowy lighting, which gives Swamp Thing its street cred as one of DC's more sophisticated books. Some Musings: - Anytime someone uses the phrase "do it to it" is a win in my book. - I might as well say it: Constantine's brief appearance here is probably more credible than how he's appeared in all the episodes of his own show put together (more on that later). The post Swamp Thing #37 appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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